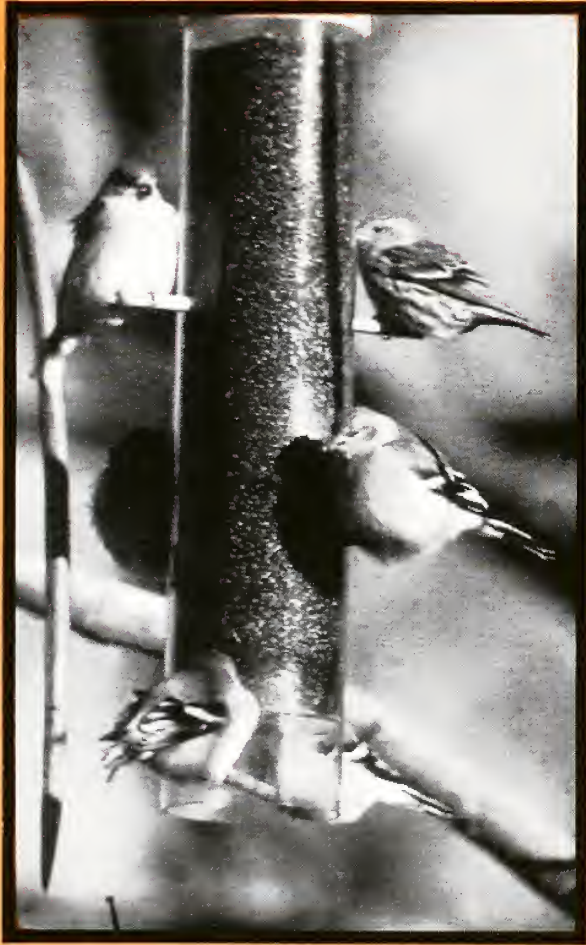


# IOWA BIRD LIFE

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Fall 1998 Volume 68 Number 4



IOWA ORNITHOLOGISTS' UNION

# IOWA BIRD LIFE

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FRONT COVER: American Goldfinches and Pine Siskin on thistle feeder. Photo by Carl Kurtz.

INSIDE BACK COVER: Editorial Staff, Subscription/Membership Information, Instructions to Authors, Officers, Board of Directors, Standing Committees.

BACK COVER: Meeting Dates, Report Deadlines, Birdline, Materials Available.

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# POPULATION TRENDS OF IOWA BIRDS THAT USE FEEDERS

DAVID JOSEPH HORN, STEVE E. FAIRBAIRN, AND RICHARD J. HOLLIS

Since 1984, the Iowa Department of Natural Resources and the Iowa Ornithologists' Union have sponsored the "Winter Bird Feeder Survey" (Hollis 1984, 1986). This survey has been conducted each winter since its inception and annually receives more than 800 completed surveys from volunteer observers throughout the state.

The birdfeeder survey method has been used previously to evaluate winter bird populations. For example, Burt and Burt (1980) used this method to study population trends of Northern Cardinals in central New York, and Finck (1996) used data from the Kansas Winter Bird Feeder Survey to determine the most common species to visit feeders. The Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology sponsors Project Feeder Watch each winter. Project Feeder Watch compiles data on the number and species of birds that visit feeders from throughout the United States and Canada to track the distribution and abundance of bird populations on a season-long continent-wide scale.

Although species that use feeders have, in general, not experienced declines that other groups of birds have (Best et al. 1996), these species may still serve as important indicators of local environmental conditions. Here, ten years of data from the "Winter Bird Feeder Survey" were analyzed in order to examine the population trends of species that visit bird feeders during mid-winter in Iowa (see cover photo). These analyses were carried out for the entire state as well as the nine regions outlined by Hollis (1984, 1986).

## METHODS

Data collected from the "Winter Bird Feeder Survey" were used to examine changes in the occurrence and abundance of bird species that used feeders in Iowa between 1985 - 1994. **Occurrence** is defined as the percentage of participating houses where a given species was present, and **abundance** is the total number of individuals of a given species at all houses combined divided by the total number of houses that participated. The survey requires participants to monitor their feeders for two consecutive days during the fourth week of January. During this period, they record the greatest number of individuals of each species observed at, under, or in the trees around their bird feeders. Birds that fly by the house or that did not use the feeder area are not counted. A more complete description of the feeder survey is provided by Hollis (1984, 1986).

In order to examine bird population trends, we first determined the occurrence and abundance of each species for each year by calculating means. Linear regression was then used to examine the state and regional trends in the occurrence and abundance of each species between 1985-1994 ( $df = 1, 8$ ) (Fig. 1) (see editor's note for explanation of regression analysis). Results were analyzed using the SAS statistical package (SAS 1985), and considered marginally significant if  $P$  was between 0.10 - 0.05, and statistically significant if  $P$  was less than 0.05. Only results that are statistically significant are reported in the discussion section. In a few cases, results reported on the survey form appeared to be spurious. Thus, if the number of individuals of a



given species at a house was more than four standard deviations from its mean when present, it was not used in analysis of the abundance data.

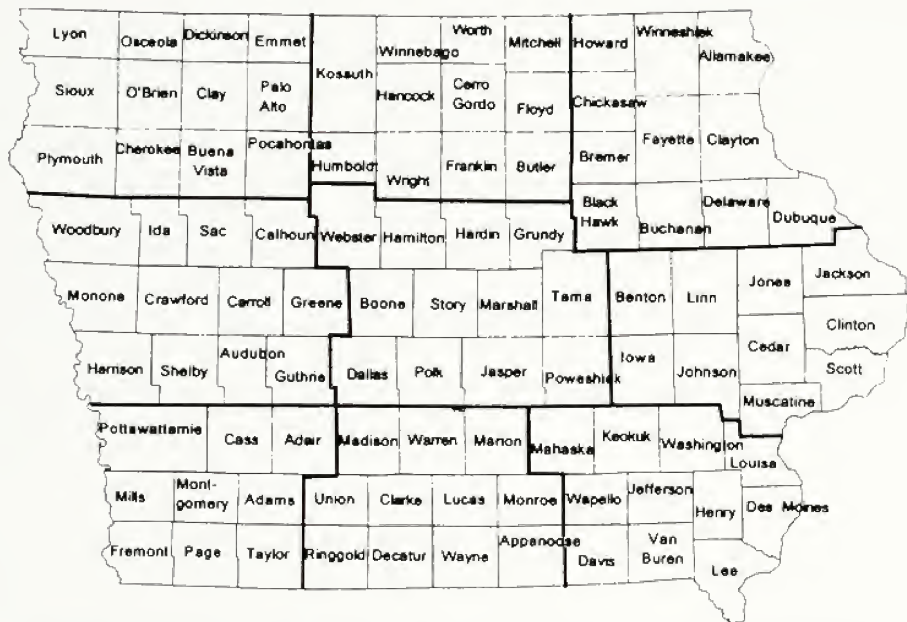


Figure 1. Iowa counties within each of nine regions used in data analysis.  
Map from Kent and Dinsmore (1996).

## RESULTS

The ten species that were observed most often (had greatest occurrence) at houses throughout Iowa from 1985 - 1994 were (in descending order): Dark-eyed Junco, Blue Jay, Black-capped Chickadee, Northern Cardinal, House Sparrow, Downy Woodpecker, American Goldfinch, White-breasted Nuthatch, European Starling, and Red-bellied Woodpecker (Table 1). The ten most abundant species at houses were (in descending order): House Sparrow, American Goldfinch, Dark-eyed Junco, Northern Cardinal, European Starling, Black-capped Chickadee, Blue Jay, American Tree Sparrow, Purple Finch, and Downy Woodpecker (Table 1).

Of the 34 species analyzed, nine had statistically significant relationships between occurrence and year (Table 1). From 1985 to 1994, the occurrence of Mourning Doves, Downy Woodpeckers, American Crows, Black-capped Chickadees, Tufted Titmice, Northern Cardinals, and White-throated Sparrows increased throughout the state of Iowa; while Rock Doves and Common Grackles decreased (Fig. 2). Ten species had a statistically significant state-wide relationship between abundance and year (Table 1). Mourning Doves, Red-bellied Woodpeckers, Downy Woodpeckers, Northern Flickers, American Crows, Black-capped Chickadees, Tufted Titmice, and White-throated Sparrows increased in abundance from 1985 to 1994, whereas the abundance of Rock Doves and House Sparrows declined (Fig. 2).

Twenty species had a statistically significant relationship between occurrence and year in at least one of the nine regions in the state (Table 2). Sixteen species had positive relationships between occurrence and year, three species had negative relationships, and one species had both. A statistically significant relationship

between abundance and year in at least one region was found for 21 species (Table 2). Seventeen species had positive relationships, three had negative relationships, while one exhibited both.

**Table 1.** Results of state-wide regression analyses between the occurrence and abundance of 34 species that used bird feeders with year.

Species	Occurrence			Abundance		
	<i>P</i>	<i>R</i> <sup>2</sup>	Mean <sup>1</sup>	<i>P</i>	<i>R</i> <sup>2</sup>	Mean <sup>2</sup>
Ring-necked Pheasant	NS <sup>3</sup>		5.2	NS		0.3
Rock Dove	0.01 -- <sup>4</sup>	0.73	5.2	0.03 --	0.46	0.3
Mourning Dove	0.01 ++	0.88	20.2	0.01 ++	0.87	1.0
Red-headed Woodpecker	NS		12.4	0.08 +	0.33	0.2
Red-bellied Woodpecker	0.06 +	0.38	40.6	0.02 ++	0.54	0.6
Downy Woodpecker	0.02 ++	0.50	71.2	0.02 ++	0.51	1.7
Hairy Woodpecker	0.07 +	0.34	36.4	NS		0.6
Northern Flicker	0.09 +	0.31	20.9	0.03 ++	0.48	0.3
Blue Jay	NS		83.8	NS		3.2
American Crow	0.01 ++	0.69	18.8	0.01 ++	0.75	0.8
Black-capped Chickadee	0.03 ++	0.48	83.6	0.04 ++	0.42	3.8
Tufted Titmouse	0.01 ++	0.74	23.3	0.01 ++	0.68	0.6
Red-breasted Nuthatch	0.09 +	0.35	11.6	0.07 +	0.39	0.2
White-breasted Nuthatch	NS		63.1	NS		1.5
Brown Creeper	NS		6.4	NS		0.1
American Robin	NS		3.5	NS		0.1
Cedar Waxwing	NS		2.7	NS		0.3
European Starling	NS		55.7	NS		4.0
Northern Cardinal	0.05 ++	0.41	82.3	0.07 +	0.36	4.3
American Tree Sparrow	NS		26.5	NS		2.2
Song Sparrow	NS		10.2	NS		0.5
White-throated Sparrow	0.04 ++	0.44	5.7	0.01 ++	0.65	0.2
White-crowned Sparrow	NS		3.3	NS		0.1
Harris's Sparrow	NS		6.1	NS		0.3
Dark-eyed Junco	NS		85.0	NS		7.0
Red-winged Blackbird	NS		1.8	NS		0.1
Common Grackle	0.03 --	0.46	12.2	0.09 -	0.32	0.5
Brown-headed Cowbird	NS		3.0	NS		0.1
Purple Finch	NS		28.5	NS		1.7
Common Redpoll	NS		3.2	NS		0.1
Pine Siskin	NS		18.3	NS		1.1
American Goldfinch	NS		69.4	NS		7.9
Evening Grosbeak	NS		1.8	NS		0.2
House Sparrow	NS		80.1	0.02 --	0.49	17.8

1. Mean occurrence from 1985 to 1994.

2. Mean abundance from 1985 to 1994.

3. NS - Relationship not significant ( $P > 0.10$ ); thus *P* and  $R^2$  values are not reported.

4. For trends that were marginally significant ( $P$  between 0.10 and 0.05), trends were denoted: + for positive and - for negative. For trends that were statistically significant ( $P < 0.05$ ), trends were denoted: ++ for positive and -- for negative.

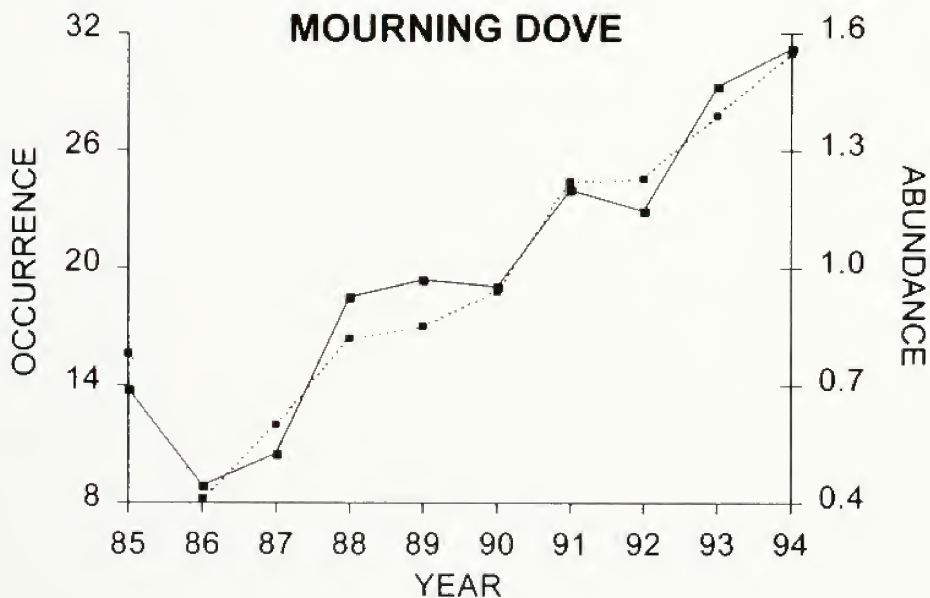
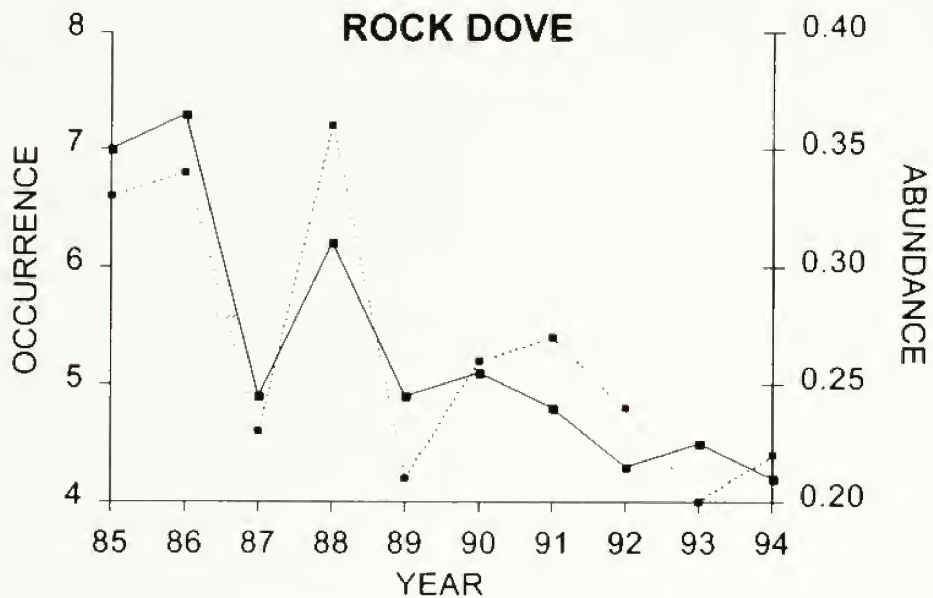


Figure 2. Statistically significant relationships between species occurrence and/or abundance with year. Solid lines represent the relationship between occurrence and year, while dashed lines represent the relationship between abundance and year.

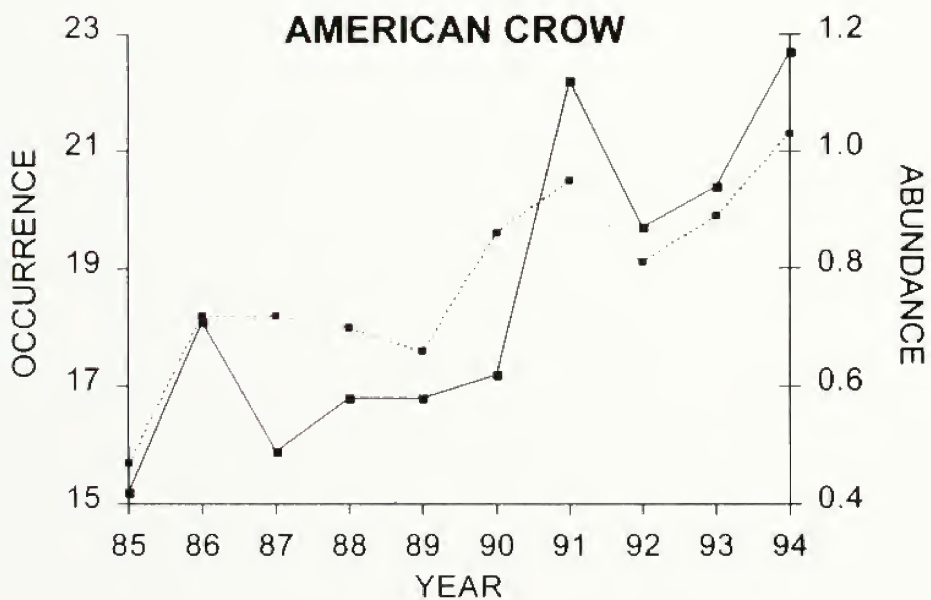
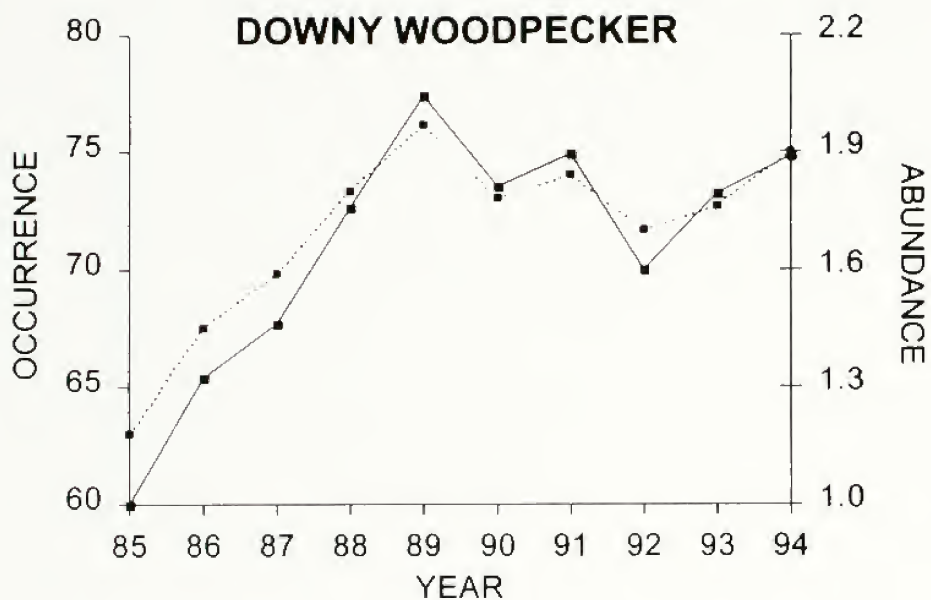


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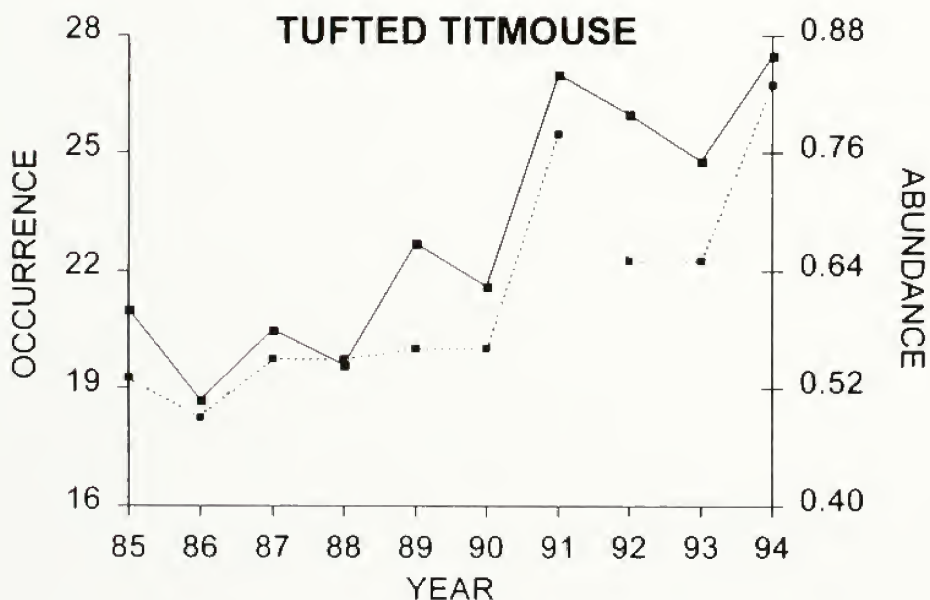
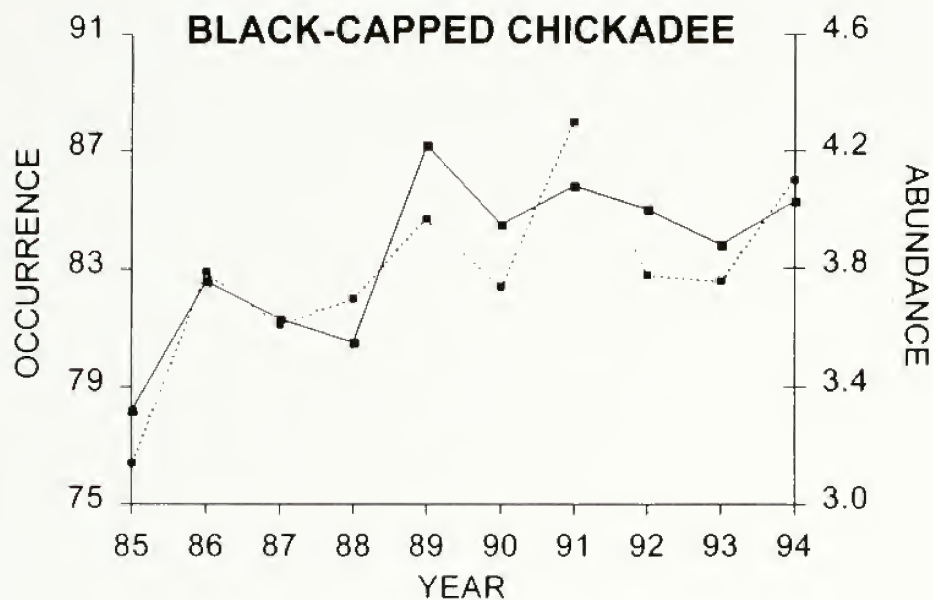


Figure 2 continued. Statistically significant relationships between species occurrence and/or abundance with year. Solid lines represent the relationship between occurrence and year, while dashed lines represent the relationship between abundance and year.



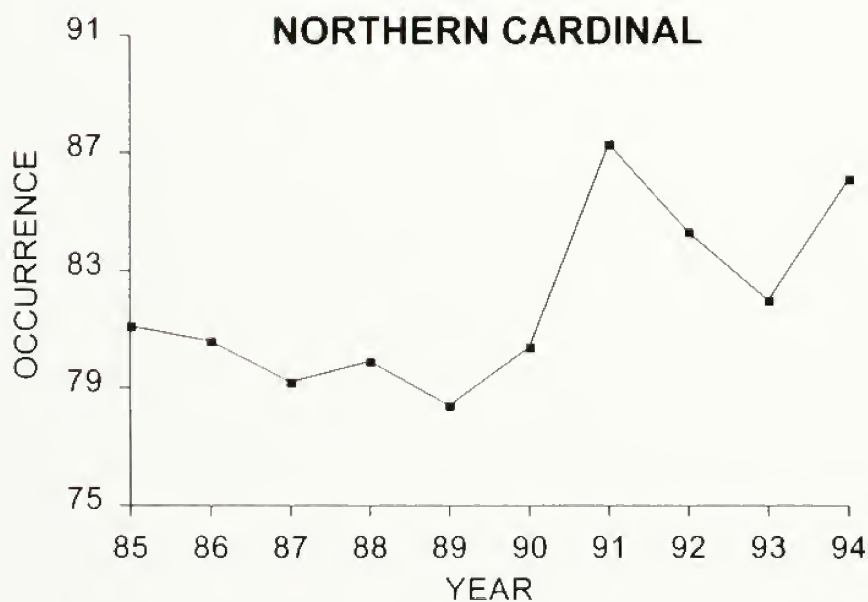
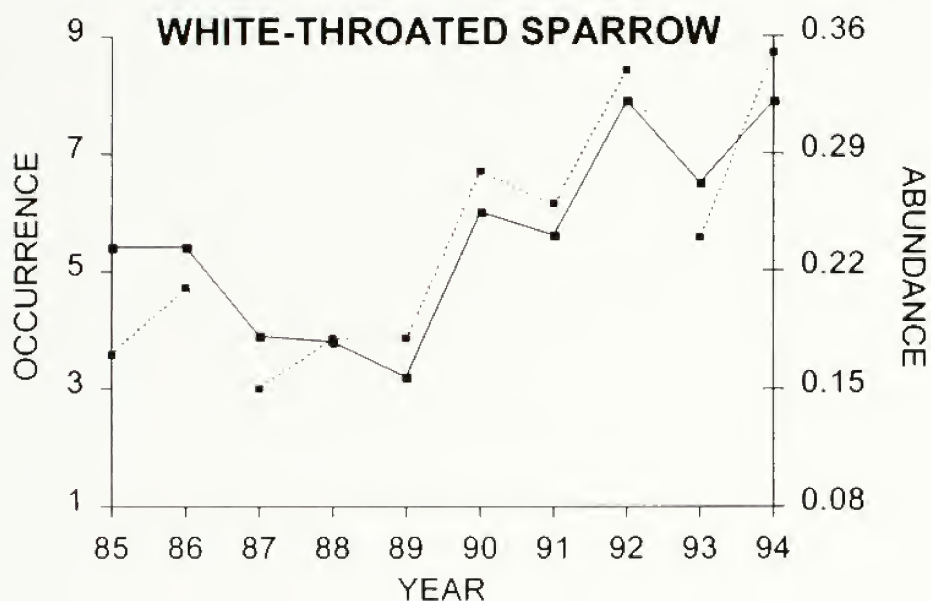
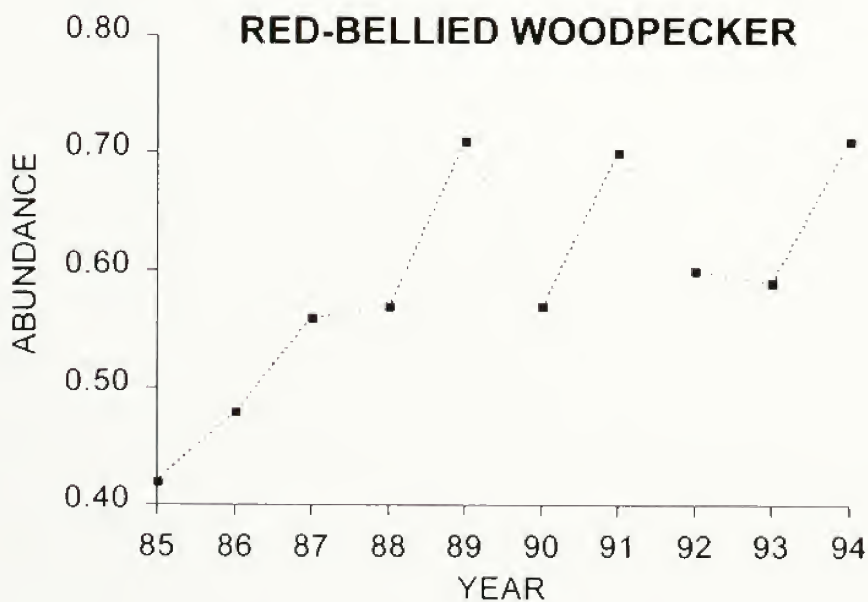
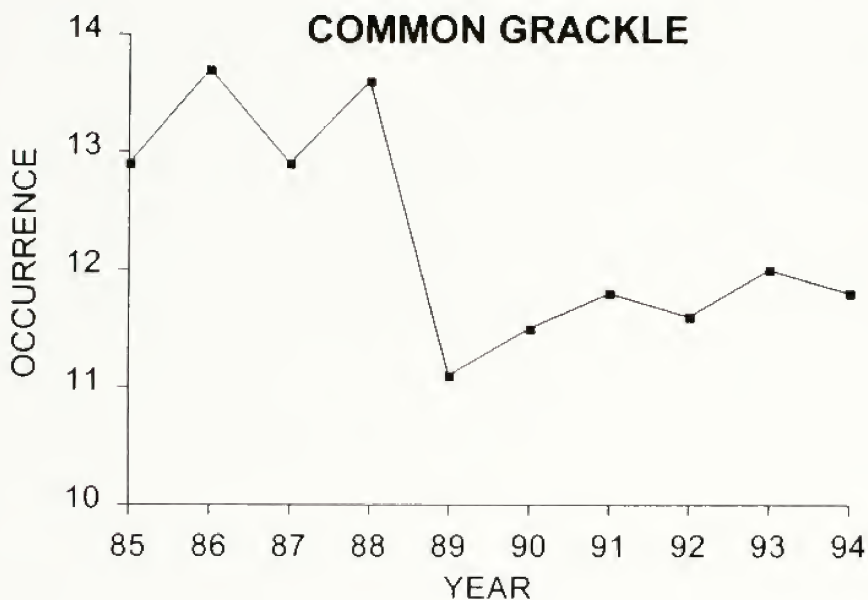


Figure 2 continued. Statistically significant relationships between species occurrence and/or abundance with year. Solid lines represent the relationship between occurrence and year, while dashed lines represent the relationship between abundance and year.



*Figure 2 continued. Statistically significant relationships between species occurrence and/or abundance with year. Solid lines represent the relationship between occurrence and year, while dashed lines represent the relationship between abundance and year.*

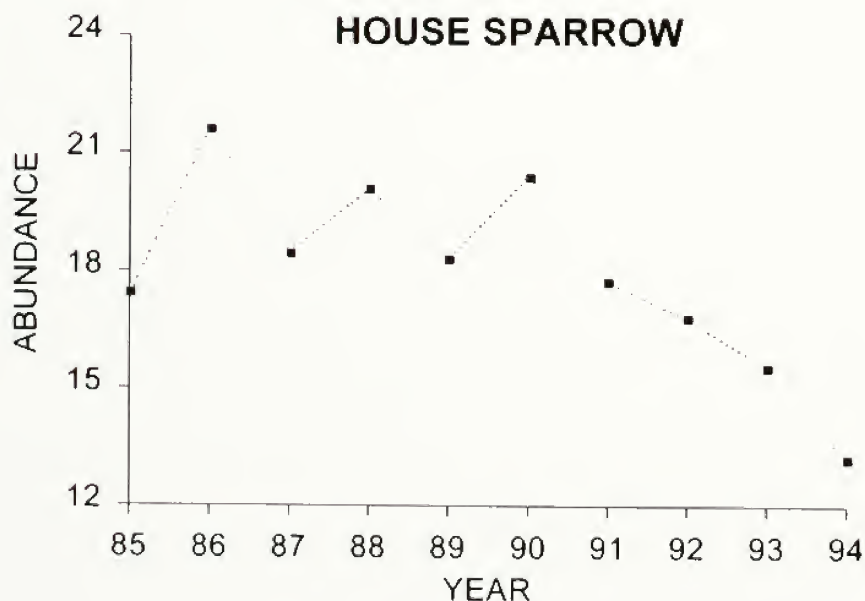
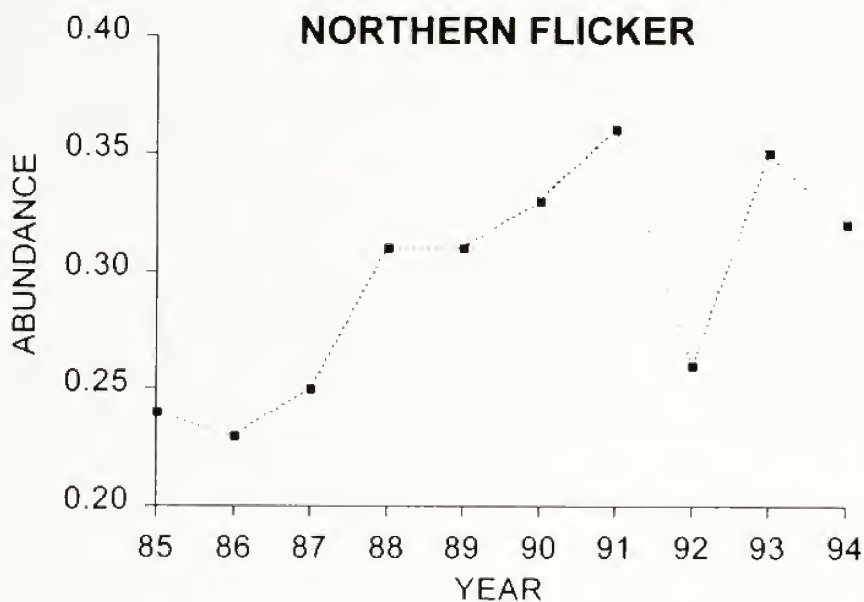


Figure 2 continued. Statistically significant relationships between species occurrence and/or abundance with year. Solid lines represent the relationship between occurrence and year, while dashed lines represent the relationship between abundance and year.

**Table 2.** Significant results of region-wide regression analyses between year and both the occurrence and abundance of 34 species that use bird feeders.

Species	Occurrence		Abundance	
	P	R <sup>2</sup>	P	R <sup>2</sup>
Northwestern Region				
Ring-necked Pheasant	NS <sup>1</sup>		0.01 ++ <sup>2</sup>	0.66
Downy Woodpecker	0.06 +	0.38	NS	
Black-capped Chickadee	0.04 ++	0.42	NS	
European Starling	0.05 -	0.39	NS	
Common Redpoll	NS		0.09 +	0.32
American Goldfinch	0.03 ++	0.47	0.07 +	0.36
House Sparrow	NS		0.05 -	0.39
North-central Region				
Ring-necked Pheasant	0.01 ++	0.65	0.01 ++	0.58
Rock Dove	0.06 -	0.38	0.05 --	0.40
Mourning Dove	0.02 ++	0.49	0.07 +	0.35
Red-bellied Woodpecker	0.09 +	0.32	0.08 +	0.34
Downy Woodpecker	NS		0.07 +	0.36
Hairy Woodpecker	0.02 ++	0.54	0.01 ++	0.63
American Crow	NS		0.06 +	0.37
Black-capped Chickadee	0.05 +	0.40	0.01 ++	0.69
European Starling	0.01 ++	0.57	NS	
Northern Cardinal	0.05 ++	0.40	0.01 ++	0.79
American Tree Sparrow	0.04 ++	0.44	NS	
White-throated Sparrow	0.08 +	0.34	NS	
Northeastern Region				
Mourning Dove	0.01 ++	0.72	0.01 ++	0.55
Downy Woodpecker	0.04 ++	0.45	0.08 +	0.33
American Crow	NS		0.09 +	0.31
European Starling	0.01 --	0.58	NS	
Northern Cardinal	0.09 +	0.32	0.01 ++	0.56
White-throated Sparrow	0.05 +	0.39	0.05 +	0.39
Brown-headed Cowbird	0.04 -	0.43	NS	
West-central Region				
Rock Dove	0.01 --	0.56	0.04 --	0.45
Red-bellied Woodpecker	0.08 +	0.34	NS	
Tufted Titmouse	0.01 ++	0.60	0.02 ++	0.53
White-breasted Nuthatch	0.05 +	0.44	NS	
American Robin	NS		0.06 +	0.38
Cedar Waxwing	0.08 +	0.33	NS	
White-throated Sparrow	0.01 ++	0.64	0.02 ++	0.49
Brown-headed Cowbird	0.04 --	0.44	NS	
American Goldfinch	NS		0.01 ++	0.56
House Sparrow	NS		0.07 -	0.35



Table 2. Continued.

Species	Occurrence		Abundance	
	P	R <sup>2</sup>	P	R <sup>2</sup>
Central Region				
Mourning Dove	0.01 ++	0.79	0.01 ++	0.85
Red-bellied Woodpecker	0.10 +	0.30	0.06 +	0.38
Downy Woodpecker	0.03 ++	0.46	0.01 ++	0.62
Hairy Woodpecker	NS		0.04 ++	0.44
Northern Flicker	0.03 ++	0.47	0.04 ++	0.44
American Crow	0.01 ++	0.71	0.01 ++	0.85
Black-capped Chickadee	0.03 ++	0.47	0.09 +	0.32
Tufted Titmouse	0.05 +	0.39	NS	
Red-breasted Nuthatch	0.06 +	0.42	0.05 ++	0.44
Northern Cardinal	0.04 ++	0.45	NS	
White-throated Sparrow	0.03 ++	0.48	NS	
House Sparrow	NS		0.01 --	0.74
East-central Region				
Mourning Dove	0.01 ++	0.73	0.03 ++	0.46
Red-bellied Woodpecker	0.04 ++	0.43	0.01 ++	0.66
Downy Woodpecker	0.06 +	0.38	0.01 ++	0.61
Hairy Woodpecker	0.07 +	0.36	0.08 +	0.33
Northern Flicker	NS		0.06 +	0.36
American Crow	0.02 ++	0.49	NS	
Tufted Titmouse	0.02 ++	0.50	0.01 ++	0.61
Red-breasted Nuthatch	NS		0.08 +	0.38
European Starling	NS		0.08 +	0.34
Harris's Sparrow	NS		0.02 ++	0.53
Southwestern Region				
Rock Dove	0.05 -	0.39	NS	
Red-headed Woodpecker	NS		0.04 --	0.41
Tufted Titmouse	0.07 +	0.36	NS	
Red-breasted Nuthatch	NS		0.04 ++	0.46
European Starling	0.01 --	0.59	NS	
American Tree Sparrow	NS		0.01 ++	0.59
Dark-eyed Junco	0.04 ++	0.43	0.05 ++	0.40
House Sparrow	0.07 -	0.36	0.09 -	0.32
South-central Region				
Mourning Dove	0.01 ++	0.71	0.06 +	0.36
Red-bellied Woodpecker	0.04 ++	0.42	0.02 ++	0.51
Downy Woodpecker	0.02 ++	0.50	0.04 ++	0.44
Northern Flicker	0.02 ++	0.53	0.01 ++	0.71
American Crow	0.01 ++	0.60	0.08 +	0.34
Tufted Titmouse	0.05 +	0.39	0.08 +	0.34

Table 2. Continued.

Species	Occurrence		Abundance	
	P	R <sup>2</sup>	P	R <sup>2</sup>
South-central Region (continued)				
Song Sparrow	0.05 ++	0.41	0.05 ++	0.40
Harris's Sparrow	0.04 ++	0.42	NS	
Common Redpoll	NS		0.02 ++	0.53
House Sparrow	NS		0.05 --	0.40
Southeastern Region				
Mourning Dove	0.01 ++	0.83	0.01 ++	0.85
Red-bellied Woodpecker	0.05 +	0.39	0.02 ++	0.54
Downy Woodpecker	0.06 +	0.37	0.01 ++	0.68
Hairy Woodpecker	0.06 +	0.38	0.03 ++	0.45
Black-capped Chickadee	0.07 +	0.36	NS	
Tufted Titmouse	0.01 ++	0.74	0.05 +	0.40
Red-breasted Nuthatch	0.09 +	0.35	0.03 ++	0.50
European Starling	0.02 --	0.52	NS	
Common Grackle	0.06 -	0.36	NS	
Common Redpoll	0.04 --	0.44	0.03 --	0.47

1. NS - Relationship not significant ( $P > 0.10$ ); thus  $P$  and  $R^2$  values are not reported.

2. For trends that were marginally significant ( $P$  between 0.10 and 0.05), trends were denoted: + for positive and - for negative. For trends that were statistically significant ( $P < 0.05$ ), trends were denoted: ++ for positive and -- for negative.

The House Finch was first put on the "Winter Bird Feeder Survey" form in 1990, and thus, was not included in the regression analyses. Beginning in 1990, the state-wide occurrence and abundance, respectively, of House Finches has been: 1990 - 8%, 0.4; 1991 - 20%, 1.4; 1992 - 28%, 2.1; 1993 - 43%, 3.4; and 1994 - 39%, 3.5. The occurrence and abundance of House Finches in 1994 ranked 13th and 8th, respectively, among 35 species.

## DISCUSSION

Overall, species in Iowa that use bird feeders in winter had stable or increasing population trends between 1985 - 1994. Of the 34 species used in data analyses, 9 (26%) increased in either occurrence or abundance state-wide, for 22 (65%) we detected no change, and 3 (9%) decreased. Eight of the species that exhibited increasing population trends were year-round residents, and one was a winter resident. Five of the increasing species, Red-bellied Woodpecker, Downy Woodpecker, Northern Flicker, Black-capped Chickadee, and Tufted Titmouse, are cavity nesting species that forage by gleaning and rarely feed on the ground. Four of the species that increased, Red-bellied Woodpecker, Downy Woodpecker, Black-capped Chickadee, and Northern Cardinal, were among the most common birds to visit feeders.

As a group, woodpeckers displayed increasing population trends throughout Iowa. The occurrence and/or abundance of Red-bellied Woodpeckers, Downy Woodpeckers,

and Northern Flickers increased state-wide, and the population trends of Hairy Woodpeckers showed an increase at the regional scale. The increase in woodpeckers occurred primarily in the eastern two-thirds of the state; only two species showed marginal increases in one of the three western regions. The only species of woodpecker that did not show a statistically significant increase in occurrence or abundance was the Red-headed Woodpecker, which exhibited a decrease in abundance in the southwestern region. Red-headed Woodpeckers do not consistently winter in the state. In some years, many winter in Iowa and in other years few are found.

Species common to urbanized areas declined. Rock Doves and House Sparrows, and to some extent European Starlings, all exhibited decreases in occurrence and/or abundance at either the state or regional scales. In addition, two blackbird species, Brown-headed Cowbird and Common Grackle, experienced decreases at either the state or regional scales.

Significant changes in the occurrence or abundance of species at feeders over time do not necessarily mean that the population of birds has changed. For example, one partial explanation for the patterns described above may be a change in the types of bird seed and feeders that are now offered by participants. Several studies indicate that both the type of bird seeds and feeders in a yard influence the abundance of individual species (Geis 1980, Horn 1995, Horn *in press*). For example, House Sparrows and Brown-headed Cowbirds prefer white proso millet to other types of seed, Mourning Doves, Chickadees, Northern Cardinals, and White-throated Sparrows prefer black-oil sunflower, while woodpeckers have an affinity for suet (Geis 1980, Horn *in press*). It is possible that individuals are feeding birds more black-oil sunflower seeds, rather than seed mixes in elevated feeders, and also providing suet (Horn pers. obs.). In addition, many participants may now be feeding all year; thereby, providing a supplemental food source during periods when natural resources may be periodically scarce (Brittingham and Temple 1988).

In only 13 years, the House Finch has become an important component of the assemblage of birds that visits feeders. The first House Finch reported in Iowa was found in Pocahontas County in the summer of 1982 (Kent and Dinsmore 1996). It is now a moderately abundant visitor to feeders and, between 1990 and 1994, has increased its state-wide occurrence nearly five fold. One reason for the decrease in abundance of House Sparrows may be this spread of House Finches across the state (Bennett 1990). Since 1990, when House Finches were observed at 8% of the houses, the number of House Sparrows has decreased considerably (Fig. 2).

One species that may become a more regular visitor to Iowa feeders is the Red-breasted Nuthatch. This irruptive species has exhibited increasing population trends in the central, southeastern, and southwestern regions.

For more than ten years, data from the Iowa "Winter Bird Feeder Survey" has provided valuable information on the winter population trends of birds that use feeders. In the next ten years, it will be interesting to determine whether year-round residents, such as woodpeckers, continue to experience increased population trends, if House Sparrows will still be declining, and whether House Finches will continue to increase in abundance.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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Editors Note: Regression analysis is a statistical method testing to see if there is a relationship between two variables. In Tables 1 and 2, the authors tested for a relationship between occurrence of a species at feeders and year, and also for a relationship between abundance of a species and year. If a significant relationship was found ( $P < 0.05$ ), this indicated that the occurrence (or abundance) of that species increased or decreased in a statistically significant way over the period 1985 to 1994. If the relationship was not significant ( $P > 0.10$ ), this indicated that a positive or negative trend between occurrence (or abundance) and year was not detected.



# FIELD REPORTS--SUMMER 1998

JAMES J. DINSMORE

## WEATHER

June started out fairly cool with lows most days in the 50s or occasionally the 40s. Highs were generally in the 60s or 70s with few days even reaching the more typical 80s. Along with this, there was considerable rain, topped off with a 12" plus cloudburst in Cass County on the 15th that led to extensive flooding on the Middle River, East Nishnabotna, and other drainages. Extensive lowland flooding was reported elsewhere in Iowa. The last 10 days of June had lots of heavy rain, high winds, and occasionally large hail. An especially strong wind storm swept through parts of central and eastern Iowa on the 29th and blew down thousands of large trees.

July was more normal in temperature with highs often in the 80s and occasionally reaching the 90s. In mid July there were a few days of temperatures in the high 90s but no 100-degree days were reported. Heavy rains were common during the first half of the month but by late July precipitation was lighter and some parts of the state were appearing a bit dry.



## HABITAT CONDITIONS

The storms in June probably had an effect on nesting by some species. Flooding in lowlands probably destroyed many nests and there were several reports of extensive but local mortality from the severe hailstorms that swept across parts of Iowa in June. The loss of thousands of large mature trees in the late June storm will undoubtedly affect some woodland species in central and east-central Iowa for some years in the future. Overall, though, this summer was probably fairly average in terms of the habitats that were available. Although less obvious, many fields that had been planted in CRP for the past decade were put back into crop production. Although Iowa will continue to have hundreds of thousands of acres enrolled in CRP, that land will rapidly diminish in northern Iowa and most of the enrolled land will be in the southern half of the state.

## UNUSUAL SPECIES

As is typical of most summers, few rare or unusual species were found. No Accidental species were reported, and the only Casual species reported was Black-headed Gull. Other uncommon species found included a Scissor-tailed Flycatcher, several sightings of Mississippi Kites at two sites, and four Clay-colored Sparrows, the first of the latter in several years. Probably the most unusual bird of the season was a Lesser White-fronted Goose in Johnson County. Although the bird almost certainly came from a captive situation, there still exists the slim possibility that it was a truly wild bird.

Among the nesting species, the biggest story was the nesting by Red-necked Grebes, the first such report for Iowa (see note by Fairbairn, this issue). Close behind

was the report of a brood of King Rails, the first in several years. Other good nest finds were two nests of Barn Owls, at least three Cooper's Hawk nests, one nest and three pairs of Northern Harriers, and two broods of Wilson's Phalaropes. The continued increase in Bald Eagle nests, and further releases of both Peregrine Falcons and Ospreys were also good news this year. The report of a "wild" pair of Trumpeter Swans nesting and producing three young is a first for the reintroduction program. Henslow's Sparrows were found at five new sites including two in northern Iowa, but at four of those, only a single bird was found.

This summer seemed to be a good one for a number of species. Both Least Terns and Piping Plovers had reasonably successful nesting seasons at one of their two nesting sites. Several grassland species also seemed to be fairly numerous this summer. These included Sedge Wren, Dickcissel, and Bobolink, species about which there has been some concern in recent years. It was also a great year for at least three secretive marsh species. Least Bittern, Virginia Rail, and Sora were all widely reported. Much of this was due to the efforts of Steve Fairbairn who found them at many of the wetlands he surveyed but other workers also encountered these species more than usual.

Amidst all of that optimism, there were some pessimistic signs too. Black-billed Cuckoos seemed to be almost totally missing, and I wonder if Common Nighthawk and Purple Martin are also declining. Although Sandhill Cranes were reported from three sites, no one mentioned any evidence of nesting. There were no reports of Bewick's Wren for the third straight year and the only report of White-eyed Vireo was almost certainly a migrant bird.

As in 1997, spring migration extended into early June. There were numerous early June reports of warblers, Olive-sided Flycatcher, and several shorebirds. Among these sightings were record late dates for Hudsonian Godwit and Connecticut Warbler, a record early date for Red-necked Phalarope, and an incredible 20 Willets in mid June. A Ross's Goose was only the second summer report.

## SPECIES DATA \* = documented; [ ] = record date

**Common Loon:** All: 1 in Wayne Co. on 2 Jun (RLC), 1 at L. Hendrix in Howard Co. on 9 Jun (RRe), 1 in basic plumage at Port Neal in Woodbury Co. on 10 Jun (BFH), 1 in basic plumage near Iowa City on 29 Jun, 2 Jul (THK), 2 in basic plumage at W. Okoboji in early July (JJo, LAS), 1 at L. Pahoja in Lyon Co. in early June (Ryan Harr fide JJD), and 1 at L. Rathbun on 20, 23 Jul (TNJ). This is more than are reported most summers.

**Pied-billed Grebe:** Evidence of nesting was reported in Boone (HZ, JJD), Cerro Gordo (JW), Clay (LAS), Dickinson (LAS), Fremont (MPR), Kossuth (MCK), and Palo Alto (LAS) counties. By far the most reported was 98, including young, at Grovers L. on 8 Jul (LAS).

**Red-necked Grebe:** A pair at a nest with 4 eggs on 17 Jun (SF) is the first confirmed nesting record for Iowa. Although 3 young were seen on 8 Jul (LAS), all had disappeared by the end of July (LAS), perhaps due to snapping turtle predation (DCH, LAS). Another was seen at Colo Ponds from 27-30 Jun (HZ, PHA, RIA, MPR).

**Eared Grebe:** All: 1 at Little Wall L. on 3, 4 Jun (JJD).

**Western Grebe:** All: 1 at Hendrickson M. in Story Co. on 1 Jun (KH fide HZ) and 1 at Trumbull L. on 25, 26 Jul (LAS).

**American White Pelican:** Most: 250 at Mud L. in Palo Alto Co. on 25 Jul (LAS) and 150 at Union Sl. N.W.R. on 26 Jul (MCK). Elsewhere, 1 to 80 were reported in Appanoose, Cerro Gordo, Clay, Dickinson, Fremont, Hancock, and Kossuth counties (Brent Danielson fide JJD, JJD, SFA, TNJ, BKP, LJP, MPR).

**Double-crested Cormorant:** Most: 30 at Union Sl. N.W.R. on 26 Jul (MCK) and 15 at Fomey L. on 29 Jun (BKP, LJP). The other reports were singles in Jefferson and Story counties (DCP, HZ).



- American Bittern:** All: 3 at Union Hills W.A. on 7 Jun (SFa) and 1 at Errington M. in Polk Co. on 14 Jun (DT).
- Least Bittern:** A banner year for this species. Fairbairn, who was surveying wetlands for birds, found Least Bitterns at 10 wetland complexes in Boone, Dickinson, Emmet, Hamilton, Hancock, Humboldt, Kossuth, Palo Alto, and Winnebago counties. Elsewhere, from 1 to 4 were found in Dickinson, Kossuth, Madison, Polk (4 sites), and Winneshiek counties (EIA, EuA, DeC, JJD, BE, SFa, MCK, MPr, JSc, DT).
- Great Blue Heron:** A colony near Bluffton had 50 young in early Jun (DeC). The largest postbreeding concentration was 300-400 at Union Sl. N.W.R. on 26 Jul (MCK).
- Great Egret:** The only sizeable postbreeding concentration was 30 at Riverton W.A. on 23 Jul (BKP, LJP).
- Little Blue Heron:** All: an adult in Appanoose Co. on 6 Jun (RLC), an adult at Colyn A. in Lucas Co. on 13 Jun (TNJ), and an imm. near Riverton W.A. on 23 Jul (BKP, LJP).
- Cattle Egret:** Most: As many as 63 near Modale in Harrison Co. on 26 Jul (JJo) and up to 38 at Moeckley Prairie in Polk Co. on 28 Jun (BE). Elsewhere from 1 to 18 were seen in Boone, Clay, Hamilton, Kossuth, and Story counties (EIA, EuA, JJD, SFa, MCK, WO, MPr, RRe, SRo) for one of the better summer showings for this species in recent years.
- Green Heron:** 1 or 2 were reported in Dickinson, Mills, and Polk counties (JJo, WRN, MPr). Although this species is found statewide, there are few reports of nesting activity.
- Black-crowned Night-Heron:** All: 1 at Harrier M. on 6 Jun (SFa), an imm. at Union Hills W.A. in Cerro Gordo Co. on 7 Jun (SFa), 3 at Union Sl. N.W.R. on 11 Jul (MCK), and 3 at Dan Green Sl. on 21 Jun (RRe)..
- Yellow-crowned Night-Heron:** All: 1 at Chichaqua W.A. in Polk Co. on 26 Jun (DT) and a subadult near Van Meter in Madison Co. on 3 Jul (EuA, EIA).
- Ibbs species:** All: 2 at Leo Shimon M. in Pocahontas Co. on 15 Jun (Dave Holstad-details, fide JJD).
- Turkey Vulture:** A nest near the Iowa R. in Iowa Co. had 2 young in July (NBe).
- Greater White-fronted Goose:** All: 1 at Hallett's Quarry in Ames on 1 Jun (HZ, JJD), 1 on the E. Nishnabotna R. in Montgomery Co. on 3 Jun (\*DEa), and 1 at Dan Green Sl. on 25 Jul (LAS).
- Lesser White-fronted Goose:** 1 at L. Macbride on 11 Jun (\*JLF, \*THK) was well described. Almost certainly this bird, an Old World species, is an escapee.
- Snow Goose:** All: 1 (snow) at Hallett's Quarry in Ames on 1, 2 Jun (HZ, JJD), 1 (snow) near Sanborn in O'Brien Co. on 1 Jul (DK), and 5 (blue) at Dan Green Sl. on 25 Jul (LAS).
- Ross's Goose:** 1 at the MidAmerican Energy ponds in Council Bluffs on 21, 22 Jun (JJD-details) is only the second summer report for Iowa.
- Trumpeter Swan:** A pair that produced 3 young on a pond near Epworth in Dubuque Co. seemed to be wild (BEh). If true, that would be a first for the reintroduction program.
- Gadwall:** Broods were seen at Spring Run W.A. on 18 Jun (SFa) and 18 Jul (LAS). One or two were seen in Boone, Cerro Gordo, Hancock, Kossuth, and Wright counties (JJD, MCK).
- American Wigeon:** All: 1 male at Maynard Reece W.P.A. on 20 Jun (JJD).
- Northern Shoveler:** Broods were reported at Maynard Reece W.P.A. (MCK) on 15 Jul, Union Sl. N.W.R. (MCK) on 15 Jul, and Kettleson W.P.A. in early June (SFa). In addition, from 1 to 6 birds were found in Appanoose, Boone, Clay, Dickinson, Polk, and Winneshiek counties (DeC, JJD, BE, TNJ, LAS).
- Northern Pintail:** 2 broods were at Maynard Reece W.P.A. on 26 Jul (MCK). Other reports were of 1 or 2 males in Boone, Hancock, Story, and Winnebago counties, all in June (JJD, SFa, HZ).
- Green-winged Teal:** Broods were reported at Elk L. W.P.A. in Clay Co. on 6 Jun (LAS) and Maynard Reece W.P.A. in Kossuth Co. on 26 Jul (MCK). Three males were at Kettleson W.P.A. on 20 Jun (JJD, SFa).
- Redhead:** Most of the reports were in Dickinson Co. A nest at Spring Run W.A. on 18 Jun (SFa) was the only evidence of nesting. As many as 48 were at Kettleson W.P.A. on 1 Jul (MPr) while 10 pairs were at Grovers L. on 17 Jun (NBe). Elsewhere 12 were at Maynard Reece W.P.A. on 23 Jun (MCK).
- Ring-necked Duck:** All: 3 at Maynard Reece W.P.A. on 17 Jun (1 of which summered, MCK), 1 male at Grovers L. on 17 Jun (NBe) and 2 there on 8 Jul (LAS), and a male at Moeckley Prairie in Polk Co. on 28 Jun (BE).

- Lesser Scaup:** All: A male at Union Hills W.A. on 4 Jun (JJD), 2 at Harrier M. on 10 Jun (JJD), 3 at S. Twin L. in Calhoun Co. on 1 Jul (MPR) and 1 that summered at Maynard Reece W.P.A. (MCK).
- Bufflehead:** All: A female with 2 young at Dan Green Sl. in mid June (Harold White fide LAS) was in the same area where a brood was seen in late May (see spring field reports).
- Hooded Merganser:** Broods were found at Mill Creek S.P. in O'Brien Co. on 3 Jun (DK) and Snake Creek M. in Greene Co. 12 Jun (JJD). Elsewhere, from 1 to 4 were found in Cerro Gordo, Clay, Lucas, Palo Alto, Polk, Pottawattamie, Winneshiek, and Wright counties (DeC, JJD, BE, TNJ, LAS).
- Common Merganser:** All: a female at L. Rathbun on 16, 30 Jul (TNJ).
- Ruddy Duck:** Broods at Iowa Lake M. in Kossuth Co. on 28 Jun (SFa), Union Sl. N.W.R. on 15 Jul (MCK), and 3 broods at Grovers L. on 8 Jul (LAS) were the only indications of nesting. Elsewhere, from 1 to 7 were found in Boone, Polk, Story (2 sites), and Winneshiek counties (DeC, JJD, WO, DT, HZ).
- Osprey:** 1 or 2 were seen in Clay, Dickinson, Polk, and Story (2 sites) counties (NBe, WO, SRO, LAS, HZ). In addition, the Macbride Raptor Project and Hartman Reserve Nature Center continued their reintroduction program. Four young were released at Coralville Res. and 4 more in Black Hawk Co. in mid July (BEh).
- Mississippi Kite:** All: 1 at Ledges S.P. on 11 Jun (PHA, RIA) and 5 Jul (EIA, EuA), 1 in Des Moines on 9 Jun and 2 on 11 Jul (PJW), and 1 in West Des Moines on 12 Jul and 2 on 22 Jul (PHA, RIA).
- Bald Eagle:** The number of nests known in Iowa continues to increase. This year, 83 nests in 33 counties were known to be active. Most continue to be in eastern, especially northeastern Iowa with 26 in Allamakee County alone but increasingly eagle nests are being found elsewhere in the state. Counties that had active nests for the first time this year were Bremer, Buchanan, Butler, Calhoun, Humboldt, Johnson, Lyon, Mills, and Sioux (BEh).
- Northern Harrier:** Besides a nest with 2 young at Union Hills W.A. on 7 Jun (SFa), pairs at Gladfelter M. in Hancock Co. on 3 Jun (SFa, JJD), Hayden Prairie in Howard Co. on 6 Jun (Nick Osness fide JJD), and in W. Lyon Co. on 17 Jun (DCH) were all strong indications of nesting. Singles, mostly females, were found at Walnut Creek N.W.R. on 13 Jun (DT), near Ruthven on 20 Jun (JJD), near Ionia in Chickasaw Co. on 11 Jul (MPR), at Maynard Reece W.P.A. on 11 Jul (MCK), Cardinal M. on 15 Jul (DeC), Deweys Pasture W.A. in Palo Alto Co. on 25 Jul (LAS), and Santee Prairie in Dickinson Co. on 26 Jul (LAS), more than are reported most years.
- Cooper's Hawk:** Nests with young were reported in Ames (3 young, JJD), near Luxembourg in Dubuque Co. (DK), and near Sutherland in O'Brien Co. (DK); also a fledgling was seen at L. Ahquabi S.P. (JSi) for one of best reports of nesting in recent years. Elsewhere, singles were found in Allamakee, Clay, Fremont, Monona, and Winneshiek counties (DeC, BKP, LJP, MPR, LAS).
- Red-shouldered Hawk:** All: 1 in Backbone S.P. in Delaware Co. on 15 Jul (WRN) near where a nest was found in 1994.
- Broad-winged Hawk:** 1 or 2 were seen in Allamakee (2 sites), Boone (2 sites), Jasper, Johnson, and Warren counties (DeC, JJD, CE, DK, MPR, JSi, Amy Yoakum and Mike Havlik fide JJD). The 2 in Warren Co. were thought to be late migrants (JSi) while the others may have been nesting.
- Swainson's Hawk:** All: 1 near Irvington in Kossuth Co. on 12 Jun (MCK).
- Peregrine Falcon:** Peregrines continued to nest in urban areas with pairs fledging 3 young each in Cedar Rapids and Des Moines. One of the Des Moines birds was injured and died after leaving the nest (BEh). Additional releases of young peregrines carried out this summer were at Effigy Mounds N.M. (9 birds), Mason City (12 birds), and Muscatine (4 birds) (BEh).
- Gray Partridge:** Observers in Hancock (JJD) and Story (HZ) counties and in northwestern Iowa (LAS) all thought this species was more abundant this year.
- Northern Bobwhite:** Reports from northern Madison and Polk counties (EIA, EuA, MPR, DT) indicated a slight northward recovery of quail populations but Huser noted that near Sioux City they had not recovered from the 1996-97 winter and Cummins reported a 15-year low in Wayne and Appanoose counties.
- King Rail:** 1 was at Errington M. on 7 Jun (BE) and again on 14, 16 Jun (DT, PHA, RIA). On 25 Jul, an adult and two fairly large chicks were seen there (BE), the first definitive nesting record in Iowa since 1992 and a new county nesting record.



- Virginia Rail:** I received far more reports this year than in any of the previous 14 years, especially because of Fairbairn's wetland bird surveys. He found from 1 to 22 individuals on 13 areas in Boone, Cerro Gordo, Dickinson, Emmet, Hamilton, Hancock, Humboldt, Kossuth, Palo Alto, and Winnebago counties including a brood at Ottosen Potholes in Humboldt Co. Other reports included a brood at Grovers L. on 26 Jul (LAS), 5 near Silver L. in Worth Co. on 23 Jul (RGo), and 1 near Ventura in Cerro Gordo Co. on 1 Jul (JLW).
- Sora:** Like the Virginia Rail, this species was more widely reported than in past years. Fairbairn found from 1 to 8 individuals on 10 wetlands in Boone, Cerro Gordo, Dickinson, Emmet, Hancock, Kossuth, Palo Alto, and Winnebago counties. In addition, 1 or 2 were found in Polk (3 sites) and Story (2 sites) counties (JJD, BE, MPr, MPr, JSc, DT, HZ).
- Common Moorhen:** All: 1 at Cardinal M. on 15 Jul (DeC).
- American Coot:** After several years with relatively few reports, coots seemed to be fairly common in northern Iowa. Evidence of nesting was noted at Anderson L. in Hamilton Co. (HZ), Cardinal M. (DeC), Grovers L. (SFa, LAS), Maynard Reece W.P.A. (MCK), and Union St. N.W.R. (MCK).
- Sandhill Crane:** All: 2 adults near Sweet M. in Bremer Co. on 25 Jul (MJL), 2 at Cardinal M. throughout June and July (DeC), and 1 or 2 heard in the Kain's L. area of the Mississippi River bottoms in Allamakee Co. on 14 Jun (WRN).
- Black-bellied Plover:** All: 1 at Waubonsie W.A. on 6 Jun (BKP, LJP) and 1 at Maynard Reece W.P.A. on 10 Jun (MCK)(ties 3rd latest). The former appeared to be injured.
- American Golden-Plover:** All: 3 at Maynard Reece W.P.A. on 10 Jun (MCK) and 1 at Maynard Reece W.P.A. on 11 Jul (MCK).
- Semipalmated Plover:** 1 at Maynard Reece W.P.A. on 10 Jun (MCK) was the last spring bird and presumably 1 there on 23 Jun (MCK) was the first southbound bird.
- Piping Plover:** In late June, 4 pairs and 3 young were found at the MidAmerican Energy ponds near Council Bluffs (JJD, BKP, LJP, MPr, BPr) while 4 pairs at Port Neal near Sioux City produced 12 fledglings (BFH), one of the best years in Iowa on record.
- American Avocet:** All: 1 near Iowa City on 28 Jul (CE).
- Greater Yellowlegs:** First: 1 at Cone M. on 28 Jun (Mike Dooley file THK-details).
- Lesser Yellowlegs:** Last northbound: 1 at Stolley P. in Clay Co. on 6 Jun (LAS). First southbound: 3 at Maynard Reece W.P.A. on 23 Jun (MCK). Peak: 129 in eastern Polk Co. on 25 Jul (BE). Unclassifiable was 1 at Kettleson W.P.A. on 14 Jun (SFa).
- Solitary Sandpiper:** First: 1 in Fremont Co. near Nebraska City on 29 Jun (MPr). Peak: 7 near Zearing on 15 Jul (HZ).
- Willet:** All: An incredible 20 at L. Rathbun on 22 Jun (TNJ)(ties record earliest) and 1 at Mill Creek S.P. in O'Brien Co. on 15 Jul (DK).
- Upland Sandpiper:** From 1 to 6 were reported in Adams (2 sites), Appanoose (2 sites), Boone, Buena Vista, Cerro Gordo, Cherokee, Chickasaw, Clay, Dallas, Dickinson (nest), Franklin, Fremont, Hancock (3 sites), Kossuth (2 sites), Lyon, Marshall, O'Brien, Osceola, Pocahontas, Polk, Story, Wayne, and Winneshiek (2 sites) counties (NBe, DeC, RIC, RLC, JJD, JJo, MCK, DK, BKP, LJP, BPr, MPr) is somewhat more than most summers.
- Hudsonian Godwit:** All: 1 at Maynard Reece W.P.A. on 10 Jun (MCK)(record latest).
- Ruddy Turnstone:** All: 4 at Maynard Reece W.P.A. on 3 Jun and 1 there on 10 Jun (MCK).
- Sanderling:** 6 at Saylorville Res. on 6 Jun (BE)(2nd latest) were the last spring birds, and 3 at L. Rathbun on 20 Jul (TNJ) were the first fall arrivals.
- Semipalmated Sandpiper:** Last: 8 near Burr Oak in Winneshiek Co. on 7 Jun (DeC) and 6 at Maynard Reece W.P.A. on 17 Jun (MCK). The first southbound bird was 1 at Port Neal on 30 Jun (BFH).
- Least Sandpiper:** First: 2 at Maynard Reece W.P.A. on 23 Jun (MCK)(ties record earliest). Most: 75 at Maynard Reece W.P.A. on 15 Jul (MCK).
- White-rumped Sandpiper:** All: 100 were at Maynard Reece W.P.A. on 3 Jun (MCK), 1 still there on 17 Jun (MCK), and 4 in Appanoose Co. on 6 Jun (RLC).
- Baird's Sandpiper:** Last: 8 at Saylorville Res. (BE) and 1 in Appanoose Co. (RLC), both on 6 Jun, and 1 at Port Neal on 10 Jun (BFH)(2nd latest). The first southbound birds were 2 at Maynard Reece W.P.A. on 21 Jul (MCK).

- Pectoral Sandpiper:** Last: 12 at Maynard Reece W.P.A. on 3 Jun (MCK). Four near Alta Vista in Chickasaw Co. on 11 Jul (MPr) were the first fall birds.
- Dunlin:** All: 9 at Maynard Reece W.P.A. on 3 Jun (MCK).
- Stilt Sandpiper:** 1 near Zearing in Story Co. on 7 Jul (HZ) was the first fall bird, and 60 at Maynard Reece W.P.A. on 15 Jul (MCK) was the most.
- Short-billed Dowitcher:** All: 1 in Appanoose Co. on 3 Jul (RLC-heard) and 2 at Maynard Reece W.P.A. on 15 Jul (MCK).
- Long-billed Dowitcher:** All: 1 at Maynard Reece W.P.A. on 21 Jul (MCK-details)(2nd earliest) is the first Iowa summer report since 1992.
- Common Snipe:** 1 near Zearing on 14 Jul (HZ) is a record early date for Story Co.
- American Woodcock:** All: 2 seen regularly at Hawkeye W.A. in Johnson Co. in June and July (NBe) and 1 at Ocheyedan W.A. in Clay Co. on 6 Jun (LAS).
- Wilson's Phalarope:** All: 2 broods at Maynard Reece W.P.A. on 26 Jul (MCK) add to the meager breeding record for this species in Iowa.
- Red-necked Phalarope:** All: A female at Maynard Reece W.P.A. on 10 Jul (MCK)(record earliest) is the first Iowa summer report since 1988.
- Franklin's Gull:** The only large groups were 100 at the dump near E. Okoboji on 20 Jun (JJD, SFa) and 400 at Kettleson W.P.A. in Dickinson Co. on 26 Jul (LAS). From 1 to 40 were reported in Appanoose, Buena Vista, Fremont, Kossuth, Polk, Pottawattamie, and Wright counties (BE, RLC, JJD, TNJ, MCK, MPr, SRo).
- Black-headed Gull:** All: 1 at Kettleson W.P.A. on 23 Jun (RRe). This is the 4th year in the last 5 that this species has been reported in that area.
- Ring-billed Gull:** Ringbills did not nest at Meinking W.A. this year, presumably because a predator occupied their nesting island (SFa). From 1 to 40 were found in Appanoose, Clay, Dickinson, Fremont, Polk, Pottawattamie, Story, and Wright counties (RLC, JJD, BE, SFa, TNJ, BKP, LJP, HZ).
- Herring Gull:** All: 1 at L. Rathbun on 3 Jul (RLC).
- Caspian Tern:** All: 1 at Cardinal M. on 3 Jun (DeC), 8 at L. Rathbun on 3 Jun and 1 there 18, 30 Jul (RLC, TNJ), 3 at Kettleson W.P.A. on 23 Jun (RRe) and 1 there on 18 Jul (LAS).
- Forster's Tern:** A nest at Gladfelter M. on 27 Jun (SFa) and 2 adults feeding a young bird at Dan Green Sl. on 18 Jul (LAS) were the only indications of nesting. As many as 28 were at Grovers L. on 8 Jul (LAS) where the species has nested in recent years. Elsewhere, from 1 to 10 were seen in Appanoose, Cerro Gordo, Kossuth, Winneshiek, and Wright counties (DeC, RLC, JJD, RGo, TNJ, MCK), mostly in early June or July and presumably migrants.
- Least Tern:** At Port Neal, 4 pairs fledged 7 young (BFH), down from last year but still a fairly good year. At the MidAmerican Energy ponds near Council Bluffs, as many as 9 adults were seen on 21, 22 Jun (JJD), but no evidence of nesting was reported.
- Black Tern:** Nesting was reported at Gladfelter M. in Hancock Co. (SFa), Spring Run W.A. (SFa), and probably at Union Sl. N.W.R. (MCK). The 60 at Anderson L. in Hamilton Co. on 3 Jun (JJD) were late migrants and the most reported. From 1 to 36 were reported in Appanoose, Cerro Gordo, Dickinson, Fremont, Howard, Jasper, Monona, and Winneshiek counties (DeC, RLC, JJD, SFa, TNJ, MCK, BKP, LJP, MPr, RRe, LAS, JLW).
- Eurasian Collared-Dove:** 1 was still at Grinnell in June and July (JJD, MPr).
- Black-billed Cuckoo:** All: Singles in Cerro Gordo Co. on 23 Jun (RGo) and Cass Co. on 7 Jul (MAP). Is this species disappearing or underreported?
- Yellow-billed Cuckoo:** 1 or 2 were reported in Boone, Cedar, Fremont, Hamilton, Johnson, Lee, Louisa, Lucas, Marshall, Muscatine, Polk, Story, Tama, Van Buren, and Warren counties (JJD, CE, DCP, BPr, MPr, DT, HZ) which encompasses most of Iowa.
- Barn Owl:** All: 7 young were banded at a nest on Zelbert Freemyer's farm in Taylor Co. (BEh), and another nest near Corydon in Wayne Co. had 4 eggs in July (BEh). I received a late report of 1 near Silver City in Mills Co. on 10 Mar (Mark Miller fide JJD).
- Short-eared Owl:** A late report was of 1 near Hawarden in Sioux Co. on 31 May (DCH).
- Common Nighthawk:** All: 2 adults and 1 imm. in Sioux City (JJo). This species is much underreported but this writer's casual observations and Thompson's as well suggest it is less common now than a few years ago.



- Chuck-will's-widow:** 1 was at the usual site near Waubonsie S.P. on 29 Jun (MPr).
- Ruby-throated Hummingbird:** 1 or 2 were reported in Clay, Henry, Johnson, Jones, Lee, Marshall, Monroe, Polk, Story, Warren, and Winneshiek counties (DeC, JJD, CE, BE, BPr, MPr, LAS).
- Yellow-bellied Sapsucker:** Evidence of nesting was noted at Bacon Creek P. in Woodbury Co. on 7 Jul (BFH), near Bluffton in Winneshiek Co. (2 nests, WRN), and in Mason City (RGo). Other reports were 2 at L. Meyer P. in Winneshiek Co. on 7, 30 Jul (DeC) and an imm. visiting a feeder in Algona from mid Jul on (MCK).
- Pileated Woodpecker:** Away from its usual eastern Iowa range, 2 young fledged from a nest at Ledges S.P. in June (JJD) and 1 was seen near Marshalltown on 4 Jun (Betty Savage fide MPr).
- Olive-sided Flycatcher:** I received 10 reports, all singles, of this species, about twice what I usually receive. The latest were at Cardinal M. and Algona on 10 Jun (DeC, MCK), Ledges S.P. on 11 Jun (Kay Niyo fide JJD), and at L. Macbride S.P. and near Ames on 13 Jun (MPr, BPr, JJD) (ties record latest).
- Yellow-bellied Flycatcher:** All: 2 at Liscomb on 3 Jun (BPr) and 1 there on 7 Jun (MPr, BPr).
- Acadian Flycatcher:** From 1 to 3 were found in Appanoose, Henry, Jones, Lee, Muscatine, and Van Buren counties (RIC, RLC, CE, BPr, MPr).
- Alder Flycatcher:** All: 1 on 10 Jun at Grammer Grove P. in Marshall Co. (MPr-details).
- Willow Flycatcher:** From 1 to 6 were found in Allamakee, Appanoose, Cerro Gordo, Jasper, Polk, Pottawattamie, Story, Tama, Wayne, Winnebago, and Winneshiek counties (DeC, RLC, JJD, SFa, RGo, MPr, DT, JLW).
- Least Flycatcher:** All: singles in Mason City on 3 Jun (JLW) and Algona on 5 Jun (MCK) were both presumably late migrants.
- Eastern Phoebe:** A pair at Wanata S.P. in Clay Co. on 18 Jul (LAS) was in northwestern Iowa where this species is sometimes difficult to find.
- Western Kingbird:** Besides the usual birds in western Iowa (Harrison, Monona, Plymouth, Pottawattamie, and Woodbury counties (JJo, BKP, LJP, BPr, MPr, Rite) and 2 at the state capitol in Des Moines (PHA, RIA), 1 was at Ledges S.P. on 24 Jun (JJD).
- Scissor-tailed Flycatcher:** All: 1 near Madnd in Boone Co. on 12 Jun (Mike Meetz-details, fide JJD) was described as being an adult.
- Loggerhead Shrike:** From 1 to 9 were reported in Appanoose, Audubon, Cerro Gordo, Fremont, Kossuth, Madison (brood), Marshall, Plymouth, Polk, Story, Van Buren, and Warren counties (ETA, EuA, RLC, BE, RGo, BFH, AMJ, MCK, BPr, MPr, Rite, JLW, HZ). These reports span most of the state.
- White-eyed Vireo:** All: 1 at Grammer Grove P. in Marshall Co. on 10 Jun (BPr, MPr).
- Bell's Vireo:** 1 or 2 were found in Appanoose, Boone, Fremont, Johnson, Jones, Polk, Story, and Winneshiek counties (DeC, RLC, CE, BE, WRN, MPr, BKP, LJP).
- Yellow-throated Vireo:** 1 or 2 were reported in Boone, Cherokee, Clayton, Davis, Henry, Marshall, Marion, Muscatine, Polk, Van Buren, Warren, and Wayne counties (RLC, JJD, FL, BPr, MPr).
- American Crow:** 338 were counted coming to roost on the ISU campus on 28 Jul (JJD).
- Purple Martin:** All: 30 at W. Okobojo on 13 Jun (JJo). Although clearly underreported, my perception is that this species is less common now than a few years ago.
- Tree Swallow:** 280 near Conesville in Muscatine Co. on 17 Jul (RRe) was the only report of a postbreeding concentration.
- Brown Creeper:** All: 1 at Effigy Mounds N.M. on 28 Jun (FL).
- Carolina Wren:** All: 1 at Waubonsie S.P. on 8 Jul (BKP, LJP), 1 at Liscomb on 19 Jul (BPr, MPr), and 1 that summered in Johnston (DT).
- Bewick's Wren:** No reports for the third straight summer.
- Winter Wren:** All: 2 at White Pine Hollow in Dubuque Co. on 1 Jun (DK); it has nested there previously.
- Sedge Wren:** There were numerous reports of this species from throughout Iowa, bolstering my impression that it was common in suitable habitat statewide.
- Blue-gray Gnatcatcher:** An adult with 4 young at Wanata S.P. in Clay Co. on 18 Jul (LAS) and 1 at Stone S.P. on 12 Jun (BFH) were on the edge of this species' usual Iowa range.
- Veery:** From 1 to 3 were reported from Allamakee, Boone, Cerro Gordo, Cherokee, Delaware, Jones, and Lucas counties (PHA, RIA, JJD, CE, RGo, DK, WRN, MPr).

- Swainson's Thrush:** All: late migrants at A.A. Call S.P. in Kossuth Co. on 1 Jun (MCK) and in Mason City on 3 Jun (JLW)(ties 3rd latest).
- Wood Thrush:** From 1 to 7 were found in Allamakee, Appanoose, Davis, Fremont, Hardin, Jasper, Johnson, Jones, Lee, Lyon, Mahaska, Monona, Palo Alto, Tama, Taylor, Warren, Washington, and Winneshiek counties (DeC, RLC, JJD, CE, FL, BKP, LJP, pop, BPr, MPr, LAS).
- Northern Mockingbird:** All: 1 in Clarke Co. on 6 Jun (MPr), 1 in Adams Co. on 29 Jun (MPr), and an adult and young bird in Madison Co. on 5 Jul (ETA, EuA). I also received a late report of 1 in Boone Co. on 10 May (Amy Yoakum, Mike Havlik fide JJD).
- Cedar Waxwing:** In Story Co., one observer thought waxwings were scarce (HZ) and another thought they were common (JJD).
- Blue-winged Warbler:** 1 or 2 were found in Allamakee, Henry, Lee, Lucas, Marshall, Van Buren, and Winneshiek counties (DeC, CE, DK, FL, MPr). Most interesting was the report of a "Lawrence's" form paired with a typical Blue-winged Warbler at Yellow River F. on 20 Jun (DK).
- Northern Parula:** From 1 to 4 were found in Henry, Jones, Lee, Lucas, Polk, Warren, and Van Buren counties (RIC, CE, EK, MPr, BPr, DT).
- Chestnut-sided Warbler:** From 1 to 3 were found in Allamakee, Cerro Gordo, Delaware, Marshall, Polk, and Winneshiek counties (DeC, WRN). Those in central Iowa were almost certainly late migrants while a pair at Yellow River S.F. on 24 Jun were carrying food and probably nesting (DK).
- Magnolia Warbler:** All: Singles at Mason City on 6 Jun (JLW), Liscomb on 7 Jun (MPr, BPr), and Mason City on 10 Jun (RGo)(2nd latest).
- Black-throated Green Warbler:** All: 1 at Liscomb on 7 Jun (MPr, BPr), 1 at Backbone S.P. in Delaware Co. on 10 Jun (WRN), and 1 near Lowell in Henry Co. on 14 Jun (MPr, BPr).
- Blackburnian Warbler:** All: 1 male at Stolley P. in Clay Co. on 6 Jun (LAS)(ties 3rd latest).
- Yellow-throated Warbler:** From 1 to 3 were found in Boone, Des Moines, Johnson, Marion, and Van Buren counties (CE, MPr, BPr, HZ).
- Prairie Warbler:** All: A male found several times in June and July at L. Macbride S.P. (CE, MPr, BPr).
- Cerulean Warbler:** From 1 to 3 were found in Allamakee, Appanoose, Boone, Dickinson, Jones, and Lee counties (NBe, RLC, JJD, CE, FL).
- American Redstart:** Carter noted that it seemed less common than usual in northeastern Iowa. The only other reports were from Cerro Gordo Co. (RGo, JLW).
- Prothonotary Warbler:** All: 2 in Appanoose Co. on 6 Jun (RLC) and 2 in Louisa Co. on 7 Jul (DCP). Several observers noted that high water kept them from checking for this species.
- Worm-eating Warbler:** All: 1 at Ledges S.P. on 6 Jun (JJD) and 2 in Shimek S.F. on 27 Jun (CE).
- Ovenbird:** From 1 to 7 were reported in Allamakee, Henry, Lucas, Tama, and Winneshiek counties, all in eastern Iowa (DeC, BPr, MPr).
- Louisiana Waterthrush:** 1 or 2 were reported in Boone, Jones, and Lee counties (JJD, CE).
- Kentucky Warbler:** 1 or 2 were reported in Appanoose, Henry (2 sites), and Lee counties (RIC, RLC, CE, MPr, BPr). Presumably this species was underreported.
- Connecticut Warbler:** All: 1 at Grammer Grove P. on 10 Jun (MPr-details)(record latest).
- Mourning Warbler:** All: 1 in Liscomb on 7 Jun (MPr, BPr), 2 at Grammer Grove P. on 10 Jun (MPr, BPr), and 1 near Bluffton in Winneshiek Co. on 10 Jun (WRN).
- Hooded Warbler:** All: 2 males at L. Ahquabi S.P. on 6, 7 Jun (JSi, AMJ, MPr) and 1 near Bluffton on 10 Jun (WRN).
- Canada Warbler:** All: Single males were reported on 6 Jun at L. Ahquabi S.P. (JSi) and near Grinnell (RV, CV).
- Yellow-breasted Chat:** All: singles at Walnut Creek N.W.R. on 3 Jun (Liessa Thomas fide JJD), Cedar Bluffs in Mahaska Co. on 6 Jun (MPr), Yellow River S.F. in June (DK), and L. Meyer P. in Winneshiek Co. on 23 Jul (a local first, DeC).
- Summer Tanager:** All: 2 males at Lacey Keosauqua S.P. on 14 Jun (MPr, BPr) and 1 or 2 males at Waubonsie S.P. on 30 Jun (MPr, BPr) and 23 Jul (BKP, LJP), both regular sites for this species.
- Scarlet Tanager:** From 1 to 4 were found in Allamakee, Appanoose, Black Hawk, Clay, Clayton, Henry, Johnson, Jones, Lee, Mahaska, Monona, Plymouth, Van Buren, Warren, and Winneshiek counties (DeC, RLC, CE, FL, BPr, MPr, RRe, LAS).



- Eastern Towhee:** A nest with eggs was found at Fish Farm Mounds in Allamakee Co. on 14 Jun (WRN, RRe).
- Clay-colored Sparrow:** All: 4 males at Freda Haffner Kettlehole in Dickinson Co. in late June (LMH) is one of the few recent summer records.
- Lark Sparrow:** From 1 to 4 were found in Appanoose, Fremont, Mahaska, Monona, Plymouth, Shelby, Story, and Woodbury counties (RLC, JJD, Kevin Healy fide JJD, MPr, RRe).
- Savannah Sparrow:** Common at Errington M. (BE) which is near the edge of its usual Iowa range.
- Henslow's Sparrow:** All: 1 n. of Crystal L. in Hancock Co. in June (LMH, SFa), 1 at Anderson Prairie in Emmet Co. in late June (LMH), 1 near Lucas in Lucas Co. on 6 Jun (MPr), 1 near L. Ahquabi in June (JSi, AMJ), 3 at a second site in Warren Co. (JSi), and 1 in Appanoose Co. on 18 Jul (RLC). Interestingly, the first two sites are in northern Iowa where there have been no recent reports of this species and the first five sites are new ones for the species.
- Blue Grosbeak:** From 1 to 3 were found in Dickinson, Fremont, Harrison, Lyon, and Sioux counties (DCH, BKP, LJP, MPr, RRe) where it is regular. A male at Ocheyedon A. in Clay Co. on 6 Jun and 2 males there on 26 Jun (LAS) were at the eastern edge of its Iowa range.
- Dickcissel:** Several observers noted Dickcissels were abundant (DeC, DCH, DT).
- Bobolink:** Several observers noted that this species seemed to be more abundant than usual this summer (EIA, EuA, DeC, DT).
- Yellow-headed Blackbird:** Outside of its usual range, Carter found 40 pairs at Cardinal M., the most he has seen there in 9 years.
- Great-tailed Grackle:** As many as 14 were found in Boone, Clay, Fremont, Greene, and Tama counties (JJD, BKP, LJP, BPr, MPr, RRe, LAS), all sites where this species had been found previously.
- Orchard Oriole:** From 1 to 6 were found in Appanoose, Cass, Dickinson, Fremont, Harrison, Ida, Jasper, Lee, Mills, Monona, Page, Palo Alto, Plymouth, Polk, and Winneshiek counties (DeC, RLC, CE, BE, MAP, BPr, MPr, RRe, LAS, DT).
- Pine Siskin:** All: 1 at a feeder in Johnston on 14 Jun (DT)
- Eurasian Tree Sparrow:** A nest near Burlington had 6 eggs on 28 Jun and 4 young on 12 Jul (PL)

## CONTRIBUTORS

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4024 Arkansas Drive, Ames, IA 50014

# SUMMER TANAGER WINTERING IN JOHNSON COUNTY

MARY E. NOBLE

On 11 January 1998 a bird appeared at my backyard heated birdbath that I immediately knew was something different, but it would be several weeks before I learned it was a Summer Tanager. This is an urban residential neighborhood; my yard is small with extensive deciduous shrubs, some trees, a brush pile, and several feeders that attract House Finches and House Sparrows in large numbers, but a limited variety of other winter birds. My first impression of this visitor was of a small, thrush-sized bird, with olive back. It disappeared while I was retrieving the camera, but returned intermittently until 6 March. Initially it was attracted only to the water; later it came often to sunflower seed feeders, one of which was attached to my viewing window, so I got close views of its markedly yellow breast and undertail coverts. The back and sides usually appeared to be fairly uniformly olive green or brown, with no wing bars. When seen close to House Finches, it was plainly larger. The bill was thick at the base like finches', but much longer and notched in the side. It had a distinct eye ring, broken front and back, and often showed a flycatcher-like crest. Some weeks and several musings through field guides passed before I finally stopped on the tanager page in the National Geographic guide. My previous experience had been limited to a few views of male Scarlet Tanagers in rural wooded settings, and this generally fluffed-up bird had seemed rounder or chunkier than the field-guide tanagers. I was unsure whether this was a Scarlet or Summer tanager until it perched in the sun with its back toward me and showed such contrast between darker primaries and the back, that I was convinced it must be a Scarlet Tanager and I e-mailed this conclusion to several local birders. I sent several less-than-ideal slides of the bird, taken through my window, to Jim Fuller and he tried to get an in-person look, but the bird didn't appear again for nearly two weeks. When I next saw it on 8 February, I called Jim and Tom Kent and they were both able to see the bird on separate visits the next day. They agreed, and soon convinced me, that the bird was a Summer Tanager.



The following notes from Tom Kent's documentation point out some of the key points in that identification:

"The bird was fairly uniform in color varying from dusky yellow with perhaps a slight greenish tinge to areas with more dark gray brown. The brightest yellow was in the vent area and undertail. The primaries were a dark brown-black, but the wing coverts were dusky yellow brown. There was a faint thin bar on the median coverts and outer aspect of the greater coverts. The head was relatively large and not round as I would expect in a Scarlet Tanager. There was a slight crest on the posterior crown that was not always evident. The bill was large, long, and pointed. The lower mandible was flesh colored and the upper mandible was dark. The overall coloration and plainness indicate a female or immature bird. The lack of prominent gray in the auriculars and light bill color argue against Hepatic Tanager. The bill length, head shape, and relative paleness of the wings favor Summer Tanager over Scarlet Tanager. The lack of prominent wing bars appears to exclude Western Tanager. The apparent lack of orange tint suggests a bird from the West or perhaps an immature."



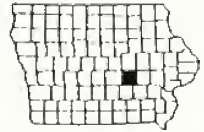
The only other Iowa winter record was a Summer Tanager photographed in Scott County on 2 December 1990. The Iowa City bird showed evidence of an injury in that it would perch at the window feeder on one foot with the other foot, which seemed incapable of gripping, held up against the breast covering a small dark bare spot. Perhaps this might explain its willingness to take up winter residence in this unlikely place?

315 South 7th. Avenue, Iowa City, IA 52245

## CLARK'S GREBE IN POWESHIEK COUNTY AT DIAMOND LAKE PARK

PAM AND REID ALLEN

Early on the afternoon of 13 December 1997 (about 12:15 p.m.), we stopped at Diamond Lake Park in Poweshiek County to look for an Oldsquaw which Mark Proescholdt had seen the day before at this park. Upon arrival, our first words were, "Oh, there's a Western Grebe," as we scanned over the waterfowl present. God only knows what made us take a really good look at this bird, except some "sixth sense" said, "wait a minute--this could be a Clark's Grebe!" This large, long-necked grebe had a long, pointed, bright orangish/yellow bill with a very noticeable black line running along the ridge of the upper mandible. The right eye seemed to be more "in the white" than the left, although both eyes were definitely "in the white." The lores were white as well on both sides of the face. The black cap extended from the top of the bill over the crown and down the nape and along the back of the neck down to the back of the bird. The main body of the bird seemed to be a lighter grayish-black than the back of the neck and the cap/crown, with the flanks showing a much lighter appearance. The bird did not vocalize or fly during the time it was being observed but did dive several times.



*Fig. 1. Clark's Grebe at Diamond Lake. Left: bird on water, 13 Dec 1997; photo by Reid Allen and right: bird taking flight, 14 Dec 1997; photo by Thomas Kent.*

We got on the cell phone and called the I.O.U. "hotline" and then Eloise and Eugene Armstrong of Booneville. They came over, along with Mark Proescholdt of Liscomb and Ann Johnson of Norwalk, to see this bird. We all agreed it was a Clark's Grebe, and it was later seen in the day by Mike Overton of Ames and the next day viewed by Tom Kent of Iowa City and others.

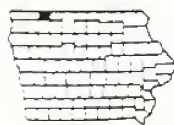
This was the seventh record of Clark's Grebe in Iowa and perhaps more will be sighted if birders take an extra moment to look at all the Western Grebes they see.

*1601 Pleasant Street, West Des Moines, IA 50265*

## RED-NECKED GREBES NEST IN IOWA

STEVE E. FAIRBAIRN

On 17 June 1998, while surveying wetland birds on a 25-acre marsh in the Jemmerson Slough Complex in Dickinson County, I saw a Red-necked Grebe preening itself in the middle of the marsh. Later, I saw two grebes in dense emergent cattails within 15 meters of where I saw the first bird. One of the grebes was more brightly colored than the other, with a brighter red neck and whiter cheek. A few minutes later, I found a floating nest of rotting vegetation in a small clump of cattails in 2.5 to 3 feet of water near where I had seen the birds previously. The nest had an outside diameter of 22 inches with a six-inch cup inside that contained four dirty white eggs (Fig. 1), one of which measured 52 by 35 mm.



*Figure 1. Red-necked Grebe nest at Jemmerson Slough complex, Dickinson County, 17 June 1998. Photo by Steve Fairbairn.*

After I completed the morning's surveys, I returned to the pond and saw the drabber colored Red-necked Grebe on the nest. Return visits on 20 and 27 June found the same bird on the nest. On 6 July, the less colorful bird was again on the nest, but the more brightly colored grebe was feeding a young that was on the back of the incubating grebe. Forty-five minutes later, the birds switched positions and the brighter bird took over incubation while the other adult started feeding the single young. Twenty minutes later there were two young moving around the nest and on the incubating adult's back. The next morning at 09:30, the brighter adult was on the nest once again, but with three young this time, and one egg still on the nest. Upon



returning at 15:00, both adults and the three young were in the middle of the marsh and one egg remained on the nest. The next morning the remaining egg was gone, but there were still only three young with the adults. Lee Schoenewe and Doug Harr reported that by 14 July only one young remained with the adults, and no birds were seen on or after 26 July.

This is the first confirmed nesting by Red-necked Grebes in Iowa. While nesting has not previously been verified for this species, in June 1993, a pair was seen building a nest in Emmet County. However, after a storm with strong winds, the birds and nest were gone the next day (IBL 63:94). Additionally, late summer records of juveniles in Iowa may indicate that Red-necked Grebes have nested previously in the state (IBL 59:8; 61:17). The nearest commonly used nesting areas are in central Minnesota and eastern South Dakota (*Birds in Iowa*, Kent and Dinsmore, 1996).

1627 Kiwi Avenue, Boone, IA 50036

## A SUMMER INVASION OF RED CROSSBILLS

JIM FULLER

It seemed very unusual that the Kansas Rare Bird Alert was reporting Red Crossbills in early July 1996, but on 13-14 July, ten Red Crossbills appeared at a feeder northeast of Iowa City. This was the first indication of a remarkable summer irruption, and during the ensuing six weeks, the Iowa Birdline hosted reports of these birds from 29 locations throughout the state. Subsequently, material submitted with summer field reports identified five additional occurrences. And for this many actual sightings to surface, there must have been a much larger number that were never reported.

Virtually all the reports involved birds visiting feeders, most often those stocked with sunflower and niger thistle, and there were two incidences where birds were observed gleaning the heads of sunflowers ornamentally grown in backyards. Although single birds were reported, most were in small flocks of fewer than ten. There were, however, four groups that ranged from 12-25 birds. It is interesting to note that many of the individual birds were streaked juveniles.

Geographically, birds were reported from every corner of the state, although almost half the sightings were from the northwest and north-central areas. Some birds were seen on only one day, while other flocks persisted at the same location for as long as four weeks. The last report came from Humboldt County on 25 August.

Apparently, the source of the Red Crossbill influx into Iowa, was birds from the southern Rocky Mountains, and was probably due to a failure of the fruit of cone-bearing trees in that area. The irruption seemed to be centered in Iowa, as there were only a scattering of sightings from adjacent states, notably one or two each from Missouri, Illinois, Kansas, and Nebraska. And when the birds left the state, they simply disappeared, as there were no later reports from the Midwest, except for those birds normally found in northern states.

In the northern hemisphere, Red Crossbills are nomads that wander the boreal and montane forests in search of their chief food source, which is the fruit of coniferous trees. They are known to nest in various locations, and at almost any season of the year. Nesting was documented in Des Moines in April 1982 and July, 1986. Small numbers are found in Iowa, usually during the winter months of most winters. They are likely to be seen in cone-bearing trees in cemeteries and parks, and favor the small cones of the Hemlock. Winter irruptions also occur sporadically, when large numbers

wander into Iowa with the maximum number of reports placed at 20 in the winter of 1984. But not since 1992, when there was a single report, have crossbills appeared in Iowa during the summer. For sheer numbers, however, the summer of 1996 was unprecedented at any season.

A final sidelight of the Red Crossbill saga involves an amusing story. An unidentified caller to the Iowa Birdline reported finding a crossbill lying on the ground after apparently hitting a window at an Ames shopping mall. After surmising that the bird was only dazed, she placed it in a box and took it home, where she attempted to "straighten its damaged bill", then later released it.

6 Longview Knoll, NE, Iowa City, IA 52240

## ROSEATE SPOONBILL IN SOUTHWESTERN IOWA

STEPHEN J. DINSMORE

At about 7 p.m. on 4 August 1997, I arrived at the Waubesa Wildlife Area and adjacent flooded areas to look for herons. This area had a large heron and egret roost in 1996, and I was hoping the roost was present again in 1997. After I crossed the Highway 2 bridge over the Missouri River from Nebraska, I noticed a few egrets flying toward a stand of willows near the east end of the flooded area. I quickly checked the flooded areas near the Missouri River, then drove east along Highway 2. About a mile east of the Highway 2 bridge I saw a large number of egrets perched in willows just south of the highway. I pulled off on the shoulder to count the birds coming to the roost. At 7:13 p.m., I was completing my first count of Great Egrets when I noticed a pinkish heron perched in the top of a larger willow, above the egrets. The bird was preening, and I immediately recognized it as a Roseate Spoonbill. I studied the bird until 7:51 p.m. The bird was very distinctive because of the body color and bill shape. The bird was slightly smaller and shorter-legged than a Great Egret. The bill was long, horizontally flattened, and had a spatulate shape. The bill appeared dull green, but when viewed from underneath it sometimes had a flesh-colored, translucent appearance. The head, neck, and body were white except for some brown smudging on the nape. The wings were pink, and when seen in flight the primaries had dusky tips. The tail was also pink. The legs were pinkish with darker knees. In flight, the bird had more rapid wingbeats than a Great Egret and flew with the neck outstretched. On the basis of the mostly white head and neck, and dusky wingtips, I aged the bird as an immature in first-fall plumage.



I returned to the roost on the morning of 5 August with Ross Silcock. At 5:53 a.m., the spoonbill left the roost. We watched it until 6:15 a.m. as it circled the roost and flew north, then turned west, and finally flew south into Nebraska. The bird was last seen coming to the roost on 14 August. To my knowledge all Iowa sightings were at the roost, most often in the evening. The bird was apparently feeding some distance away as it often arrived very late, sometimes an hour or more after the last egrets had arrived. Apparently, the bird was feeding in adjacent Otoe County, Nebraska; observations there on 5 and 14 August (pers. obs.) provided the fourth record for Nebraska.

Roseate Spoonbills are extremely rare vagrants to the Midwest. This is the second record for Iowa. The first record was of an immature on 16 August 1960 at Union Slough National Wildlife Refuge in Kossuth County in north-central Iowa (Burgess, H. H. 1960. Roseate Spoonbill observed at Union Slough. *Iowa Bird Life* 30:67-68).



I located additional records for Wisconsin (1), Nebraska (3), Missouri (1), and Kansas (3). There are no recent reports for Illinois, Minnesota, or the Dakotas.

612 1/2 West Magnolia Street, Fort Collins, CO 80521

## WINTER DICKCISSEL AT BURLINGTON

AARON E. BREES

On 19 January 1998, I made my annual trip to Burlington in search of Eurasian Tree Sparrow. After arriving at the Tama Road area north of town, I located a large mixed flock of birds in the brush lining 115th Street. From a distance, the flock appeared to consist of House Sparrows, Dark-eyed Juncos, American Tree Sparrows, and about 15 Eurasian Tree Sparrows. The birds were feeding on the ground in the ditch as well as flying across the road to a feeder. As I slowly drove by, I noticed a House Sparrow-sized bird with a bright yellow wash on its breast. Not being able to identify it, I turned the car around and got out my camera. As I pulled back up to the brush, the bird hopped up into a tree and sat in full view. The yellow wash was brightest at the top of the breast, fading to white lower down. The throat was white, outlined on each side with a thin dark line. Across the top of the breast was a black bib. The back, tail, and wings of the bird were brown except for the wing coverts which were rusty. As I photographed the bird, it became obvious that I was looking at a male Dickcissel in basic plumage. This is Iowa's fifth winter record of the species, which usually winters from central Mexico to northern South America (*Birds in Iowa*, Kent and Dinsmore, 1996).



509 South West Street, Corydon, IA 50060

## ROSS'S GULL IN POTTAWATTAMIE COUNTY

LOREN AND BABS PADEFORD

On 27 December 1997, we were driving around Lake Manawa with Jim and Sandy Kovanda, stopping periodically to look for birds on the lake. The lake was mostly frozen except for a narrow opening on the west side. The sun was shining and there was a lot of glare from the ice. We were scanning the lake for gulls when we saw a bird with tern-like buoyant flight. For a few minutes, because of glare and distance, we could not identify the bird. After some study through binoculars and scopes, we determined that the bird was probably a Ross's Gull. As we watched the bird for about 30 minutes, it flew and sat on the ice alternately. About 11:00 a.m. it flew south off the lake and toward the Mid-American ponds. We drove to the ponds but could not relocate it.



We went back to Lake Manawa that afternoon and found the bird again about 3:15 p.m. in much more favorable viewing conditions. The bird was a small gull, the only one on the lake, with short legs and small bill. The only birds on the lake for size comparison were Ruddy Ducks and Common Mergansers. It appeared intermediate in size between the two. In good light, the bird had an obvious pink blush on the breast and belly. The head was small, white, and rounded with no visible markings or collar. The upper wings and mantle were light gray. The wings

were long and pointed with no black markings. When sitting, the wingtips extended beyond the tail. The ventral side of the wings was about two shades darker gray. There was a white trailing edge in the secondaries and inner primaries, visible on both the dorsal and ventral sides of the wings. The white trailing edge was widest where the primaries and secondaries meet and got thinner toward the end of the wing. The tail was entirely white and appeared wedge-shaped when spread.

The bird was very active, either flying from one end of the open water to the other or dipping down to alight momentarily on the ice. When the bird was on the ice it walked with rapid leg movement. It would frequently stop to pick at something on the ice. When on the ice, it looked much like a pigeon in profile and movement. In flight it appeared very tern-like.

We saw the bird again on 28 December 1997 in the same location. It was seen by many observers on 29, 30, and 31 December. The weather was warming those last days of December, and more open water was present on Lake Manawa. It departed the area on the morning of 31 December.

This sighting was the third record of this arctic species for Iowa, the second having been recorded 13 to 18 December 1998 at Red Rocks Reservoir (see note, page 138, this issue).

*1405 Little John Road, Bellevue, NE 68005*

## ROSS'S GULL AT RED ROCK RESERVOIR

JIM SINCLAIR

On 13 December 1997 Rick Trieff and I headed to Marion County for a day of birding the Red Rock Reservoir. We arrived below the dam at 8 a.m. and quickly decided to move downstream from the North Tailwaters Area to the Howell Station campground for a better perspective on the numerous gulls loafing along the north shore of the river. As we were scanning the gulls from our new position, a small pale bird fluttered through my field of view and landed on the shoreline about 60 yards away. Gazing at the bird with the naked eye, my first impression was of a small dove, followed quickly by my exclamation "Ross's Gull!"



The bird remained on the shoreline for a few moments allowing Rick and me a good look. The bird then flew upstream about 50 yards where it landed in the water among some Ring-billed Gulls. We watched the bird for about five minutes as it loafed in the water, at which point the gull took flight and spent the next five minutes patrolling the tailwater area. Our last view of the Ross's Gull came as a Bald Eagle soared across the tailwaters area, sending the bird up and over the dam toward the reservoir proper.

The following description would indicate that this bird was in adult basic plumage. The mantle was a pale gray and the head was white with a small, dark vertical slash behind each eye. The breast and belly had a faint but discernable pink wash. Approximately one half to two thirds the size of the accompanying Ring-billed Gulls, the Ross's Gull's wings were proportionately long and pointed and this, coupled with the wedge-shaped tail, gave the bird a long, tapered look. Dove-like features included a small head, tiny black bill, long tapered body and wings, and very short legs. When patrolling the tailwaters area, the bird's flight was delicate and bouncing, more like a tern than a gull. However, when the gull flew over the dam



after being spooked by the eagle, the flight was fast and direct and resembled that of a pigeon or dove.

After the bird disappeared, Rick and I contacted the birdline and several other birders to insure that word of this find got out. From 13 through 18 December this bird entertained not only Iowans, but numerous people from out of state as well. In an amazing set of circumstances Iowa's third Ross's Gull was found the next week by Loren and Babs Padelford at Lake Manawa (see note, page 137, this issue).

The Ross's Gull is an anomaly in more than one regard. Not only are the shape and color unique, but this species is also characterized by a number of life history mysteries as well. These include where are the Ross's Gulls regular wintering grounds, why are there increasing numbers of records from the lower 48 states, and what is the actual North American breeding range of this species?

*810 North B Street, Indianola, IA 50125*

## A WINTER RECORD OF LE CONTE'S SPARROW

JIM SINCLAIR

On 21 December 1997, while participating in the Saylorville Christmas Bird Count, Rick Trieff and I discovered a Le Conte's Sparrow at Brenton Slough in northeastern Dallas County. The bird was found in a tuft of grass on the edge of a dry pothole. As we approached the bird, it flew a short distance into the marsh vegetation and landed on a weed stem. At this point the bird allowed us to approach within 10 feet and afforded us a leisurely and detailed look.



The feature which first alerted us to the bird was its small size, approximately five inches in length. The flat-headed, small-billed head was dominated by a white crown stripe, a broad orange eyebrow stripe, and a purplish cheek patch. The breast and flanks were a rich buff color with fine streakings extending down the flanks. The mantle was dominated by prominent white feather edgings which gave the bird's back a white striped appearance.

The Le Conte's Sparrow is rare in Iowa in winter with this being only the fourth accepted record. Although rarely found in Iowa in winter, this species' winter range extends into southern Illinois and central Missouri. The fall and early winter of 1997 were exceptionally mild, perhaps contributing to this bird's late Iowa residence.

*810 North B Street, Indianola, IA 50125*

## BOOK REVIEW

**A Guide to the Nests, Eggs, and Nestlings of North American Birds, Second edition** by Paul J. Baicich and Colin J. O. Harrison. Academic Press, San Diego, 1997. 347 pp., 64 color plates. softbound, \$22.95. This updated edition is a welcome replacement to the 1978, long out-of-print first edition by Harrison. The book covers 688 species of North American (including Greenland) birds. For each, a description of the typical nesting habitat and nest placement is provided. Detailed descriptions of the nest, breeding season, eggs, incubation, nestling, and nestling period are given for each species. Most users of the book will make most use of the 16 color plates of nestlings (covering 243 species) and 48 color plates of eggs (498 species). The plates of the eggs in particular seem to be well done. The colors and shapes seem to be quite good and for some species, more than one egg is illustrated to show within-species variation in color pattern. The plates and text are cross referenced to each other making it easy to move between the verbal description and color plate. Although the plates of the young birds are more limited in number, they do cover most species with precocial young and thus are useful in identifying young of those groups. More than 100 line drawings illustrate nest placement for many species as well as the young of some groups such as grebes and shorebirds. With the era of egg collection well behind us, some people may question the value of this book. I found the earlier edition very valuable during the breeding bird atlas project and consider this new one even better. Many birders often find nests with no adults around and want to know who built the nest and other information about their breeding biology. This book will help answer those questions.--James J. Dinsmore, 4024 Arkansas Dr. Ames, IA 50014

### FIFTY YEARS AGO IN IOWA BIRD LIFE

Julian Burroughs, son of noted naturalist John Burroughs, wrote the leading article in the December 1948 issue of *Iowa Bird Life*. In it, he described the flocks of mergansers on the Hudson River in New York and compared the scene to one described by Thoreau 90 years earlier. A summary of the 1948 Iowa Spring Bird Census includes nine counts which saw a total of 167 species, much less than the 230 plus species we have had on recent spring counts. The top count, 132 species at Cedar Rapids would still be a respectable total today. An article by James Hodges comments on the problems of interpreting data from bird counts, especially those produced when some totals are indeed counts and others are based on estimates. Fifty years later, these same problems still confound our use of such data. Among several short notes, B. O. Wolden reports seeing a flock of 75-80 Sandhill Cranes over his home at Estherville. That was the largest flock of cranes reported in Iowa in many years, and only in recent years have such large flocks been reported again. Finally, the death of Dr. Thomas C. Stephens, a biology professor at Morningside College and long a leading student of Iowa birds was reported.-ed.







The IOWA ORNITHOLOGISTS' UNION, founded in 1923, encourages interest in the identification, study, and protection of birds in Iowa and seeks to unite those who have these interests in common. *Iowa Bird Life* and *I.O.U. News* are quarterly publications of the Union.

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## EDITORIAL STAFF

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## SUBSCRIPTION/MEMBERSHIP INFORMATION

Institutions may subscribe to *Iowa Bird Life* for \$20 per year. Individuals may join the Iowa Ornithologists' Union according to the following membership classes: Regular (\$20); Regular as spouse or minor child of another Regular member without publications (\$4 first additional family member, \$2 each additional family member); Contributing (\$20 plus any additional tax-deductible contribution to the I.O.U.); and Life (\$500 as single payment or \$125 for each of four years). Members will also receive the quarterly *I.O.U. News* and are eligible to vote and hold office in the Union. Send subscriptions, membership payments, or address changes to Curt Nelson or Marty Pauley, 22675 Spruce Ave., Mason City, IA 50401 (e-mail: MPauley@jumpgate.net).

## INSTRUCTIONS TO AUTHORS

Original manuscripts, notes, letters (indicate if for publication), editorials, and other materials relating to birds and bird finding in Iowa should be sent to the editor. Accepted manuscripts will generally be published promptly, depending on space available, with the following absolute deadlines: 15 November for the Winter issue; 15 February for the Spring issue; 15 May for the Summer issue; and 15 July for the Fall issue. Most manuscripts will be refereed. All material should be typed double-spaced or hand printed in ink on 8 1/2 by 11 inch paper. Authors should pattern their style after a current issue of the journal. If you want more detailed guidelines or advice regarding the appropriateness of your topic for *Iowa Bird Life*, contact the editor. Manuscripts may also be submitted on computer disk (Word 4.0 for Macintosh or compatible programs). Please submit one printed copy of the manuscript with the disk.

## OFFICERS OF THE IOWA ORNITHOLOGISTS' UNION

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## UPCOMING MEETINGS OF IOWA ORNITHOLOGISTS' UNION

30 April-2 May 1999, Lake Rathbun/Centerville area

### FIELD REPORTS

Anyone observing birds in Iowa is encouraged to report their findings on a quarterly basis to the Field Reports editors. Sample reporting and documentation forms suitable for duplication are available from the editor (send self-addressed stamped envelope to Jim Dinsmore, 4024 Arkansas Dr., Ames, IA 50014). An article describing the reporting process is also available.

Deadlines for receipt of field reports are as follows:

- \*Winter (Dec, Jan, Feb)--3 March (Robert Cecil, 1315 41st St., Des Moines, IA 50311)
- \*Spring (Mar, Apr, May)--3 June (Thomas H. Kent, 211 Richards St., Iowa City, IA 52246)
- \*Summer (Jun, Jul)--3 August (James J. Dinsmore, 4024 Arkansas Dr., Ames, IA 50014)
- \*Fall (Aug, Sep, Oct, Nov)--3 December (Thomas H. Kent, 211 Richards St., Iowa City, IA 52246)

### CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT

\*Deadline for receipt of reports: 15 January. For forms and instructions write: Stephen J. Dinsmore, 612 1/2 W. Magnolia, Fort Collins, CO 80521.

### IOWA BIRDLINE 319-338-9881

The birdline is a recorded summary of interesting recent bird sightings in Iowa. At the end of the report you can leave a message and report recent sightings. Be sure to give your name and phone number as well as the location of the bird and date seen. Call in as soon as possible after sighting a rare bird. Jim Fuller checks the reports daily and updates the recording on Monday, so make sure Sunday sightings are reported by Sunday night.

I.O.U. HOMEPAGE: <http://storm.simpson.edu/~birding/>

### I.O.U. NEWS

Send items of interest for the newsletter to the editors (Hank and Linda Zaletel, 1928 6th St., Nevada, IA 50201).

### MATERIALS AVAILABLE

Back issues of *Iowa Bird Life* are available through the editorial office. For order form, send self-addressed envelope to: Iowa Bird Life, 4024 Arkansas Dr., Ames, IA 50014.

Field Checklist of Iowa Birds--1996 Edition: 25 for \$8.00, postpaid and other I.O.U. materials are available from Maridel Jackson, 410 S> Wstview Dr., Ankeny, IA 50021. Also available at annual meetings.

### REPORTING NEBRASKA BIRDS

Sightings of Nebraska birds, including those within the Nebraska portion of DeSoto N.W.R., should be reported to Loren and Babs Padelford, 1405 Little John Road, Bellevue, NE 68005. Formats for reporting and documentation are the same as for Iowa. The Nebraska Bird Line, available 24 hours a day, is 402-292-5325. Iowa birders are encouraged to report their Nebraska sightings to this number.

### ADDRESS CHANGES

Please send address changes/corrections to Marty Pauley, 22675 Spruce Ave., Mason City, IA 50401

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